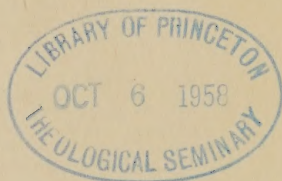



**THE HISTORY of  
Coins and Symbols  
in ANCIENT ISRAEL**

**WIRGIN and MANDEL**



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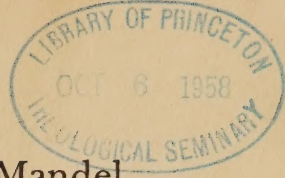


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THE HISTORY OF  
COINS AND SYMBOLS  
IN ANCIENT ISRAEL





Wolf Wirgin and Siegfried Mandel

The History of  
Coins and Symbols  
in Ancient Israel

*Illustrated*



*An Exposition-University Book*

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Dedicated

to the memory of

Dov Berek and Miriam Rachel Wirgin



## Acknowledgments

TO THOSE people mentioned in the Introduction, my thanks are extended for their timely encouragements. Appreciation must also be recorded for the invaluable criticism offered by A. Kindler of the Haaretz Museum in Tel Aviv; Dr. Alice Muehsam, who assisted so efficiently in the preparation of several earlier articles on ancient Jewish coin problems; Edward Uhlan, for his high-spirited co-operation on the publisher's end; Dorothy Mandel, for her many expert drawings in this book; and Professor Peter Fingesten, who has liberally drawn from his own studies on the relation of symbolism and art to advise on some aspects of the book.

As for the new coin-dating theories proposed in this book and the presentation of many facts on which these theories are based, the responsibility is mine.

WOLF WIRGIN





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## Introduction

THIS BOOK is intended to be many things to many people. For the general reader and coin collectors in whatever field, we attempt to unfold visually and textually the story of ancient Jewish coins in their historical setting. For the expert numismatist, technical evidence is offered that calls for a reconsideration of present coin classifications and datings, especially when it comes to the intriguing "Alexander" and "Freedom" series. For the historian, several new interpretations of coin script and design show a continuity and sequence in coin minting directly related to periods of ancient Jewish life to which too little attention has been paid so far. Finally, for that ever-growing group of moderns in quest for insight into man's expression of religious and secular experience through the use of symbolism, this book explores psychological motivations and traces some of the avenues that made possible the vigorous migration of symbols among ancient cultures.

Coins are as much a part of historical research as written source documents. Because they couch their message in symbols and script, historians have relied on numismatists to decipher meanings. Numismatists for their part have been overeager to assign coins to periods already illuminated by historians. As a result of this circular activity, the realm of ancient Jewish coins has been structured into classifications that are more romantic than scientific. If we but let the coins speak for themselves, they will often reveal things about traditions and peoples that may differ from our preconceived ideas.

About twenty years ago Wolf Wirgin began collecting Jewish coins after an inch-high ad aroused his curiosity; with the aid of a dealer's catalogue he bought his first coins. Unfortunately, the original Wirgin collection was lost when he was forced out of Germany by the Nazis. But the coin bug had bitten deep and he started all over again in the late thirties after having settled in Palestine. There he was right at the source of things and learned about the coin business, coin detail, and authenticity from the inside through a friendship with the late coin dealer Isaak Isersky.

Jerusalem proved to be the real hunting ground for the old coins. In the Old City and its vicinity the bulk of the finds is still made. It was a familiar sight to see the *fellahin*, an Arab peasant or laborer, bring products to market and occasional coin finds. Some coin-hungry people habitually stationed themselves on roads leading from the villages and pounced on the *fellahin*, shouting the question, "*Fe antika? Fe antika?*" ("Any coins?") Wirgin became acquainted with one of the men who made this a profession and who became known throughout the country. Eleazar Shachor, during the many years he handled coins, became an expert in his own way. To trade with him, Wirgin found, was like playing an extended game of chess. Sometimes it took weeks to finish one particular purchase; but it was worth it. What made dealing with him so useful was the fact that he displayed his entire coin stock to Wirgin. Usually a dealer will show only one or two specimens and lock away the rest in order to make the coins rare. To Shachor, Wirgin was able to say, "Show me all the coins you have, because I need more than one of each."

By studying coins in large quantities, Wirgin was impressed with the fact that a coin cannot be properly assessed if considered as an isolated piece. The ancient Jewish coin,



particularly, has life within a series of related coins. Only by sizing up coins in mass can we hope to re-create and get the feel of situations as they existed in ancient times. This principle underlies the method by which he built up *comparative* coin series, some of which are reproduced in this book.

Living with the ancient coins for many years, it became insistently clear to Wirgin that standard classifications of coins required considerable revision. It is not easy for people to cast away a standard order of things. However, the accumulation of proof became so great that Wirgin was compelled to regroup the coins and reassess their historical dating. He broached his new theories to a known numismatist and a historian in Israel, both of whom urged him to continue in his quest for substantiation of his theories.

In 1947, Wirgin obtained an export license from the British Mandate Government, crated his collection, and came to New York, where he continued his numismatic research and coin-collecting that included many purchases in the United States and Europe to supplement an already notable collection. Also, in the United States his theories were favorably received and informally encouraged by well-known numismatists, including Edward Gans. To put these theories to a test, Wirgin published a number of articles. The reactions did not take long in coming. In official Israeli numismatic circles, opposition was almost violent. The reason for this may be found in their commitment to traditional catalogue listings, on the basis of which they had earlier put several coin types with descriptive bylines on Israeli postage stamps. Though perpetuation of a dubious identification of coins may seem the easy way out, it is not in the interest of historical accuracy to put up dogmatic barriers. Reaction in American numismatic and archeologi-

cal circles showed no opposition or negative answers. Among acknowledgments as to the plausibility of Wirgin's theories, came answers from Dr. W. F. Albright, professor of Semitic languages at Johns Hopkins University, and Dr. Stephen J. Kayser, director of the Jewish Museum in New York.

Along the line, it was my pleasure to become acquainted with Wolf Wirgin, and he suggested that my studies of symbolism could be useful in approaching numismatic problems from another vital direction. Symbols form a communicative link from the past to the present, and those found on ancient Jewish coins are particularly rich in meaning. That was enough persuasion to accept the challenge of attempting to reconstruct their possible origins and cultural adaptations.

Some time ago, the late Gilbert Askew, a numismatic expert of England's Seaby Ltd., wrote to Wirgin about the ancient Jewish coins, and in his letter he said, "It is important that people start to think again about these coins." That is all one can really hope for. To remain idle and simply insist on the correctness of one's own opinion for opinion's sake is in no one's interest. The strength of an idea is in its testing and in its encouragement of continued search for new evidence and knowledge.

SIEGFRIED MANDEL

## CHAPTER ONE

### The Ancient World and Jewish Coins

ON THE FACE of coins we can read the record of civilizations clear back to ancient times. Kings, priests, and other rulers could not resist the tempting surfaces of the durable metal coins to immortalize themselves, their mythologies, religious symbols, and dynastic reigns. Human intelligence conceived these coins as a means of barter which eliminated cumbersome swapping of one product for another and smoothed the way toward economic systems as we know them. But to many, coins had magical potency and became part of their folkways. Even today peasants put coins of precious metals under their pillows for curing headaches; they believe that the deified image on the coins has healing powers. In the Orient people observe the custom of placing seven silver coins on a corpse during burial ceremonies, possibly reminiscent of the practices of neighboring cultures during Biblical times.

There is a good deal of romance in coins both for the collector and the history-conscious individual. Coins provide historical records of past periods and sometimes serve as corroborative evidence for historians. To our mind, there has been much splendid research into the dating, cataloguing, and general classifying of historical coins, but along with this research there has been lost that spirit of flexibility so essential to the further development of scientific numismatics, the study of coins and medals. The reason for this is the fact that rigid classification and cataloguing discourages speculation and historical re-evaluation. This is especially true in the field of ancient Jewish coins. Much fundamental work has

been done by tireless coin collectors and researchers, but the field is still wide open for more comprehensive views in reconstructing the history of Jewish coins. Like the paleologist who revisits the earliest human cultures and the archeologist who digs them up, the numismatist, in his own way, constantly contributes to reviving the past with new and significant insights.

The wealth of historical writings handed down to us through the ages has made possible a remarkably complete history of the Jews. In fact, numismatists were so fascinated by these old documents that they threw critical caution to the wind and began publishing catalogues and handbooks that claimed to identify almost every Jewish coin. As a result, many of the coin classifications based on historical writings have proved to be inaccurate. It would be wrong to say that not enough attention has been paid to Jewish coins; yet it needs to be said that many of the fabulous clues staring at us from them have been entirely neglected.

Too much reliance has been placed on the old documents as the only source for identifying Jewish coins. It must be kept in mind that Jewish coins are in their own right archeological monuments or records which can *supplement* the old writings with facts that have not appeared in those writings. This valuable relationship needs to be fully explored and will yield much startling information.

In recent years it has become a vogue for historians to decipher the religious meaning of symbols found on ancient Jewish objects of art. In doing so they used the old writings as source material without recognizing the need to guard against one special pitfall: The people who made the pieces of art and worked out the symbols on them belonged to a group different from the people who wrote the old documents. For that reason methods of deciphering symbols on

coins by relying on historical documents alone may lead numismatists astray. This of course does not detract from the numismatic technique of identifying coins by their symbols. It simply means that this technique is not altogether appropriate in picturing the history of ancient Jewish coins.

Since many Jewish coins possess a richness of inscriptions but do not actually indicate the specific time of issue, the door is open to speculation. When we shut this door with conclusive pronouncements, we are doing numismatics an injustice. There is continual need for revised interpretation because new background material has a way of turning up from time to time. With all this in mind, Jewish coins require a different approach than the one in vogue. First, let us put a *maximum of emphasis on the possible interrelation between the different coin types themselves*. Second, whatever our findings on the relation of the coin types may be, they will take priority over any of the old historical writings, regardless of how reliable these writings may seem.

Another reason why we will give priority to conclusions reached after studying coin-type relations rather than the old documents is this: we are never entirely sure that the original written records of old have come down to us intact. The preservation of historical records depends primarily on the reliability and memory of the writer of the records, and then on the reliability of those who transcribed or copied the original records. In ancient days there were no printing presses; everything had to be copied by hand. Because of innumerable transcriptions, translations, and retranslations it is no wonder that there came into existence documents which presented differing versions, or documents which strayed from the originals.

When it comes to coins, however, the story is entirely different. The evidence on metal coins stays intact from the



day they are struck or coined until our own time. Sometimes the situation is complicated when the original coin was "overstamped" at a later period. But even then we are dealing with firsthand or source material. If we examine Jewish coins as source material, we find information that adds to our knowledge of cultural history.

All too often coins are used to illustrate accepted textual history rather than to illuminate history. With our approach, we will try not to accept preconceived notions, but, instead, take advantage of the numerous clues provided by inscriptions and symbols on series of coins in order to reconstruct their historical settings.

Before making direct contact with the ancient Jewish world through the story of coins, we might talk a bit about the general background of coins and the techniques by which numismatists ferret out their special place and meaning.

If you would take a trip to the small island of Yap in the Pacific, you would see there people who carry circular stone objects fitted onto a pole. One such object is twelve feet in diameter and is said to be the world's largest bit of currency. In addition to muscle you would need a lot of elbow room if you were to go shopping in a supermarket with this type of currency. But, of course, to the Yap with his primitive society, this constitutes no problem. To him these stones have value and are accepted as a proper means of wealth and exchange.

Other nonmetallic objects too have served as money. Take for example cowrie shells, the shells of snail-like marine animals. These are used as money tokens in such remote places as Timbuctoo and other areas in Africa and Asia. As is sometimes the case with coins, these tokens also have cul-



tural significance. Not only are the cowrie shells used as money, but in regions like the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan they have a wider meaning. There you find Nubian young ladies dressed solely in small, shredded leather fringes worn about the loins. And on top of the fringes there may be clusters of cowrie shells. Some travelers have mistaken the fringes-and-cowrie-shell combination for a type of money belt or a decorative device designed to call attention to the wearer. Though these are logical deductions, they are not altogether true. Actually, these cowrie shells are worn by the lady to ward off the *malus oculus*, the evil-coveting eye, of some passer-by. This example clearly shows the importance of gaining a proper perspective of things by viewing them in their cultural setting.

Many other objects played or still play a role in local trade all over the world. Wampum, tobacco, musket balls, and tea had an important place in the lives of the early American colonists. Lumps of dried cod and other fish were used in Newfoundland and the Scandinavian countries; spices, camels, slaves constituted part of Afro-Asian trade traffic. To these we can add the "knife money" of China, dating back some five thousand years, the fishhook of Ceylon, rings, glass beads, gold dust, cakes of salt, and dried animal skins. What we notice about these objects is that they have utility value; they can be used in everyday life to serve some practical purpose. This primitive way of giving away something one does not need for something that is needed has its drawbacks. There is a limit as to the number of slaves or the amount of salt one household could use. Then again the odd sizes, qualities, weights, and shapes of these objects were of such variety that no official status could be given them.

On the borderline between such items of barter and coins as we know them there were, for instance, Celtic gold cur-

rency rings and arm bands of the late Bronze Age. As recently as hundred years ago similar rings of brass were found in Central Africa. It is known that as far back as 950 B.C. some rulers in Asia Minor allowed standard payments to be made in bronze rings. Sometimes it is possible to trace back the historical evolution of certain coins. The Chinese knife money, which we mentioned earlier, originally consisted of a handle and a blade. To facilitate carrying this "money" around, they punched holes in the handle, but eventually they got rid of the blade and retained the perforated handle, which was gradually shaped into a coin that has remained in use through the centuries. Only the inscription and shape have varied, while the basic design has remained.

In the ancient world another form of "money" became popular, namely wedge-shaped metals. We find reference to them in the Book of Joshua (VII:21). Achan of the tribe of Judah confesses to Joshua that he has pilfered from the treasury of conquered Jericho that had been set aside for the house of the Lord. "When I saw among the spoil," said Achan, "a goodly Shinar [Babylonian] mantle, and two hundred shekels of silver, and *a wedge of gold* of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them and took them." Not only does this passage tell us about the existence of metal wedges but it also tells us that the early shekel was a measurement in weight rather than a true coin.

On Abraham's deal with Ephron, from whom the former bought a cave and field in Machpelah for purposes of family burial, the Old Testament states: "And Abraham hearkened unto Ephron; and Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver, which he had named in the hearing of the children of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant" (Genesis 26:16). Again we notice that the *weight* of the shekel plays the important role.

What answer can we give to the question as to who made the first coins and where they originated? Many numismatists have hounded records and scrutinized the world's treasures of coins, only to come up with conflicting and inconclusive opinions. Some say that it all began in China about four thousand years ago, with the casting of coins into small sword-shaped objects. This copper "sword money" had a long life span. Conjecture has it that roundish money made an appearance about 1100 B.C. and had blank surfaces. Four hundred years later some inscriptions appear—usually the name of a deceased Chinese emperor.

Other numismatists hold out for Persia, India, Greece, or such countries as Lydia in Asia Minor. Still other speculation points to the metal wedges we have talked about and mentioned in the Old Testament as providing a springboard for currency as we understand it. Etymologically the word "coin" comes from *cuneus*, a wedge, going back to the Latin. In the course of language development the coin has picked up a number of relatives such as "coign," "quoin," "corner," which are architectural terms for projecting wedges; "cuneiform" denotes wedge-shaped writing, common among the ancients before pen-and-ink writing was introduced; and the medieval English game of "coyte," or "quoit," which required the use of a flattish piece of iron to be thrown at a peg in the ground. There is a tradition, then, that the wedge-shaped coin made an appearance in Britain of old and that its name was long familiar.

From the practical standpoint of coin history a coin has more than local value if it meets the following requirements: established or standard size, shape, value, and *metallic content*; recognized official weight and specific value; and authorized inscriptions, symbols, and portraits. These requirements also mean that a civilization must be well ad-

vanced to be able to produce coins in any quantity. Minting facilities and artisans who skilfully design coins are essential to the manufacture of coins.

The Greeks in all probability were the first to make coins that matched the requirements which we listed. Talking about the Greek method of coining about 700 B.C., numismatist and historian Charles Seltman describes it in this fashion:

An artist or a craftsman would carve an intaglio [a below-surface incision] design on a thick disk of bronze; this was the *obverse* die which fitted into a pit sunk in the top face of an anvil. On the lower of a square-faced bronze punch the man next carved another intaglio design; this was the *reverse* die.

In a little furnace nearby, blank disks of silver, carefully adjusted to the correct weight, were heated to make them adequately malleable, and one by one these silver disks were placed with the aid of a pair of tongs upon the anvil over the sunk obverse die on the end of the square-faced punch held in a man's left hand. The hammer in his right hand smote several blows upon the upper end of the punch. The tongs pulled the silver disk away, for it was now a finished coin which required only to refrigerate [to cool].

This method of *striking* coins was still common until about five hundred years ago. Another way to manufacture coins is by *casting* them, that is, mixing molten metal to a required standard proportion and then pouring it into a mold which gives it a specific shape. The *struck* coins require dies that are hand-cut and depend on the artistry and skill of the designer for their pictorial or inscription sharpness of detail; and the *flans*—the unstamped pieces of metal shaped ready to form coins—had to be made by casting. The *cast* coins, because of the method of manufacture, have blurred characteristics in surface design and contour edging while



the coins *struck* from a die feature clear-cut characteristics.\*

Modern technology has brought the minting of coins to the mass-production stage and in one year some countries turn out more coins than did the ancients during centuries. Though the methods have changed, we still recognize the origins. The story of the word "money" testifies to this. An old Roman legend has it that when the Gauls attacked Rome in the fourth century B.C., a horde of enemy soldiers scrambled up the hill of the Capitol. Under cover of a dark night they went undetected by the Romans until a flock of sacred geese dedicated to the goddess Juno set up a loud noise. In gratitude the Romans erected a temple to Juno on that particular spot and called it the temple of Juno Moneta, *moneta* signifying "the warner." Sometime later the first Roman mint was located in a section of Juno's temple and it was named Moneta, as were the coins which were minted there. Money, mint, and other monetary terms derive their word-meaning from the Roman *moneta*.

Though we moderns see money primarily as a means of commercial transaction, it should not be forgotten that in antiquity coins were the only means of mass reproduction of writing and drawing. They were closely linked to the art of sculpture possessed by the ancients and the ample supply

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\* It is not unusual to find that on the earliest silver coins in the Aegean world designs were only placed on the *obverse* side of a coin. The *obverse* side, or the "heads," from then on carried the principal art design, while the *reverse*, or the "tails," of the coin was used for vital statistics that help identify it in terms of monetary value and place of origin. Some other terminology common to coins is the process of *overstriking*, or the striking of new designs on an earlier coin, which may or may not obscure the original. When the details on a coin are sunk below the coin's surface, they are called *incuse* coins.

of metals. Moreover, the striking of coins was a privilege or right which symbolized the sovereignty and degree of independence of a country under a specific government or ruler. Usually then a government used the inscription on coinage to proclaim its authority. Also, the degree of coinage indicated to what extent there were trade relations with other peoples. Ancient Egypt, for example, had a high degree of centralized government in which the Pharaohs monopolized the economy of the country and discouraged the growth of a trading class that would have required coin currency for its activities. The absence of coinage in such cases indicates the absence of foreign trade.

It seems then that an ancient country had to possess a degree of autonomy, trade relations carried on by independent merchants, an authoritative government, and minting facilities before coins could make an appearance. As far as Jewish history is concerned, it was not until about the second century B.C. that large-scale and official coinage was adopted. Before that time the Old Testament makes frequent reference to money transactions. Those involving money could not have been very extensive, because not until 336 B.C., the time of Alexander the Great, did the various cities not too distant from Jerusalem—Sidon, Joppa, Tyre—begin to make abundant use of their mints for coinage purposes.

In drawing boundary lines for our story of ancient Jewish coins, it will be useful to sketch quickly those historical and cultural settings that may help us to understand the symbols and inscriptions.

We have the period from Abraham's departure from Babylon to the Israelites' conquest of Canaan, during which the patriarchs played so monumental a role; from about 1200 to 586 B.C. there is a fabulous era of judges, kings, prophets,



architecture, wars, deep spiritual insights that later reverberated around the world, trade and commerce—in short the *First Commonwealth*; then we see an era of tragedy and heroism, of conflict and temporary national unity, the story of the Babylonian captivity and the Jews' return to rebuild the Temple, extensive contact with Persian and Greek cultures, rule by the Hasmonean dynasty and the iron fist of Rome—all in the period of the *Second Commonwealth*, which lasted until 70 B.C. With the burning of Jerusalem in 70 B.C., Rome put the center of Jewish independence to the torch. But nationalistic pride fanned the flames of revolt anew, without being able to shake the grip of Rome. The two major revolts took place A.D. 66–70 and 132–135. From the military point of view the Second Revolt led by Bar Kochba was more carefully organized than the First Revolt led by gallant leaders, and it took fierce, full-scale combat by the Roman legions to defeat them. With the disastrous outcome, Judea became desolate and the centers of religious and cultural activity moved farther and farther away from Jerusalem to such cities as Tiberias in Galilee and the more distant Babylon.

All this historical drama took place in a comparatively small region. Palestine at that time was bounded by Syria and Egypt, and its coastline on the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea was about one hundred fifty miles in length, low and sandy, and geographically broken by Mount Carmel. The plains of Zebulun, Sharon, and Judea tie in with the rising highlands of Galilee in the north. In the vicinity of Hebron and Samaria there are smaller plains and mountain ranges reaching south from Hebron that are interspersed with deep valleys. The valley of the Jordan lies between these ranges, while the river itself flows down the mountains of Hermon and broadens out into Lake Hula and the Sea of Galilee, and

finally flows into the famous Dead Sea. There is a wide variation in climate from the dry subtropical weather of the Dead Sea region to the cool highlands.

As a land artery between the civilizations of the north and those of the south and as a land bridge between Mesopotamia and Egypt, Palestine's plains of Esdraelon that stretch from Galilee to Samaria continually rang with the clash of battling tribes and nations. The cities on the plains were always open invitation for attack, while those in the Judean Hills were more secure, forming the last strongholds against the Romans during the years of the revolts. Coins are part and parcel of this historical drama, and with their symbols and inscriptions reflect the stream of cultural ideas and seething political conflicts.

Because of their geographical position and contact with other peoples, it is likely that the Jews were acquainted with the earliest coins in circulation. These consisted of a variety of gold and silver staters or electrum coins of the ancient Greek states. Electrum, being a natural alloy made up of four parts gold and one part silver, lent itself to durable coinage. Because of their precious-metal content, the electrum coins had intrinsic value, which helped them obtain vogue and stability.

In 680 B.C., at the time of the later prophets of the Old Testament, Aegina also issued electrum coins and a year later began to strike silver coins that showed a sea turtle on the obverse and an incused square on the reverse. Athens, in the middle of the sixth century B.C., took a step ahead in coin design by enhancing both sides of their coins with inscriptions and representational figures. The most famous of the lot showed the helmeted goddess Athene on the obverse, while on the reverse side appeared her identification symbols—an owl and twigs of olive. Later in the same century, the Greeks

issued coins whose carefully standardized weight and artistic design were copied by peoples in India, Persia, Egypt, and Arabia; among them were especially the coins that carried the Athenian owl. This showed two things: the extensive cultural routes traveled by coins and the gradually spreading acceptance of coins as standard currency.

On these early coins the representation of animals predominates—bulls, lions, deer. Later we see agricultural symbols, such as barley, an ear of corn, or a sheaf of wheat. Then, on Roman coins, appear the host of gods drawn from Greek mythology. Much later the gods are replaced by portraits of the emperors.

Up until 587 B.C., when Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylonia, quelled a Judean rebellion by taking its upper classes into exile, there was frequent mention of metal bar weights which later became coin denominations. The Hebrew root *shakol* means to weigh, so that the earliest *shekels* were ingots, melted cast metal, of certain recognized weight.

The Babylonian exile lasted about fifty years and during that span contact with foreign coins became even more unavoidable. After Cyrus, king of Persia, conquered Babylonia, some fifty thousand Jews returned to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. Under Persian domination during the fifth and fourth centuries, there appear coins inscribed *Yehud* (Hebrew for "Judea") that feature Athene's owl. In subsequent Jewish coins the influence of ancient-world neighbors, such as Babylonia and Persia, becomes obvious. On the heels of Persian victories over the Babylonians and Lydians, gold and silver coinage of high quality came into circulation. The gold coins called *darics* and *double darics* were named after the elder Persian King Darius Hystaspis (521–486 B.C.). Darics and *sigloi* coins were issued prolifically by the kings Darius and Artaxerxes and featured the same design: a crowned,

half-kneeling king with bow and spear on the obverse; a rough, incused surface on the reverse.

That the Jews were familiar with the darics is clear from the post-exile writings of Ezra:

And some of the heads of fathers' houses, when they came to the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem, offered willingly for the house of God to set up in its place; they gave after their ability into the treasury of the work *threescore and one thousand darics of gold*, and five thousand pounds of silver, and one hundred priests' tunics. (Ezra 2:68-69.)

At Arbela in 331 B.C., Alexander the Great broke the back of the Persian empire and symbolically issued coins bearing his name to replace the sigloi and darics. These coins consisted of gold staters and silver tetradrachms. On the latter was a head which more closely resembled Alexander than the semi-god Hercules, while on the reverse was the figure of Zeus seated on a throne and holding his well-known eagle and scepter.

Young, ambitious Alexander of Macedon, who had consolidated Greece, welded together an efficient army, and had subdued the lands of the East, began a military march down the Mediterranean coast. After Damascus fell to Alexander's armies, Tyre was brought to her knees as thousands of its defenders were hanged on the city walls. Then Gaza was taken and Jerusalem was next on the conquerer's list. We are told by the famous historian of antiquity Josephus that when Alexander arrived at Scopus the high priest Jaddua, his priestly followers, and an impressively white-robed mass of people met the king. Alexander was so taken by the religious display that instead of destroying Jerusalem he offered a sacrifice in the Temple. Moreover, he allowed the Jews freedom

to live according to their own laws and granted privileges that amounted to self-government within his domain.

Important to an understanding of Jewish coin history is the relation between the Jewish cities and those of the neighboring Phoenician cities of Aradus, Tyre, and Sidon. Contact between these cities go way back to King Solomon's times. When we search for the origins of some of the symbols that appear later on Jewish coins, it will be necessary for us to explore this cultural area. Right now let us be content with saying that Solomon was an extremely astute diplomat, who knew how to pull strings in the capitals of the ancient world. Records tell us that Solomon even persuaded the Phoenicians to furnish ships and naval personnel for a joint expedition with the Jews to foray for gold.

And king Solomon made a navy of ships in Ezion-geber, which is beside Eloth, on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom. And Hiram [the king of Tyre] sent in the navy his servants, shipmen that had knowledge of the sea, with the servants of Solomon. And they came to Ophir, and fetched from thence gold. . . . (I Kings 9:26-28.)

As an historical aside, this three-year voyage to Ophir, which was supposedly located on the coast of southeast Africa, was not repeated again jointly. Once the Phoenicians found the gold site they went it alone.

For our numismatic story historical incidents of this sort are significant because they tell us about political and cultural relations and allow us to infer that the ancient peoples were familiar with one another's customs and coinages. The *Phoenician* city of Aradus on the northern coast put gold and silver coins into circulation about the fifth century B.C., using standard figures from *Greek* mythology, such as Athene and



Tyche, the goddess of fortune. Later, under Roman rule it issued coins that reflected its colonial status under the empire.

Tyre's coin history is very similar to that of Aradus, as it too issued coins of the archaic type in the fifth century B.C., with the familiar figures of dolphins, owls, and some distinctly Phoenician inscriptions which help to place their date. Along with the coins of Aradus and Tyre, the Jews were acquainted also with the coins of Sidon, Gaza, Marathus, Gebal, Decapolis, Samaria, and Ascalon, which ranged from archaic coin types to the flat tetradrachm.

All this brings us to a turning point in world history—the death of Alexander in 323 B.C. The thirty-three-year-old empire builder, who was variously called an “unparalleled genius” or “madman of Macedonia,” had asked the Egyptian god Ammon Ra whether it could be possible that a common mortal—Philip of Macedonia—could have been his father. This “divine conceit” prevented him from making any plans for the future in case of his death. He left behind him vast dominions that included Asia Minor, Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Assyria clear into the borders of India. A wild scramble followed as the power-hungry generals turned their armies against one another and for about a century brought ruin and destruction to countless provinces over which the battles raged. The chroniclers of the *Maccabees* record the turmoil during which rulers changed constantly “and evils were multiplied on the earth.”

From a series of chaotic wars rose two primary empires. Ptolemy, Alexander's smooth right-hand man, set up rule in Egypt that held fast until Caesar came into the picture. Seleucus, a Machiavellian schemer, founded a dynasty in Asia Minor that was bounded by Mesopotamia in the east and Armenia to the north. Geographically, the Jews again were at the mercy of contending dynasties, as their lands felt the



shifting and confused domination by Alexander's heirs. Since most of the military traffic passed along the coast and the plains of Galilee, the rest of the country and Jerusalem in the highlands weathered the storms much better. Temporarily, the Seleucid dynasty stabilized its hold in 198 B.C., and events in Palestine began to take a different turn—a turn which meant new political and cultural convulsions.

Some brief details of the historical events that followed in the subsequent fifty years are of particular interest because numismatists have used them to either establish or refute contentions about the coinage of certain denominations and the issuing of Jewish coins.

Culturally, the Jews were held together by stern priestly strictures and puritanic views of life, but the pressures of neighboring eastern and Greek philosophy and customs began to penetrate the fabric of Jewish traditions. The result was disastrous factionalism and parties that disagreed even amongst themselves. Roughly they may be divided into "reform" Hellenists and Traditionalists. The Hellenists accepted a debased and watered-down form of Greek culture and would not have minded merging with other civilizations; on the other hand, most of the Traditionalists made no compromise whatever and hewed to pure religious distinctions. The Hellenistic sympathizers were the Sadducees, and their opponents were the Pharisees, who developed from a more mystical movement.\*

In 175 B.C. Antiochus IV of Syria, who named himself Epiphanes, or the incarnation of God, proceeded to act the role of a mad despot and attempted to Hellenize the Jews *en masse*.

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\* Historically speaking, from the *Maccabees* descended the insurgent *Zealots*; from the mystical *Hasideans* developed the pietistic *Pharisees*; and the pro-Syrian or Hellenistic group gave rise to the *Sadducees*.

To this end hordes of his soldiers stripped the Temple, looted, burned and enslaved people. The Book of Daniel, written in those times, tried to inspire hope with the story of Daniel, who escaped unscathed from the lion's den and predicted the fall of the oppressor. More important, Antioch's arrogant exhibition of destructiveness through his army, reputed to be the best-trained in the ancient world, infuriated the divided Jews. Factions temporarily buried their quarrels and, as the Book of Enoch puts it, "horns grew upon the lambs," as Jewish villagers turned into guerrilla fighters led by the old priest Mattathias and his five sons, the Maccabees, who were descended from the priestly Hasmonean family. Harassed by other uprisings in his empire, Antiochus could not bring his full power to bear on the Jewish fighters, who won four vital battles. One was on the traditional site of Joshua's rout of the Amorites a thousand years earlier, namely the tiny Emmaus path, leading from the plains of the coast into the hills of Modin. Once a military stalemate was reached, the Syrians, in 142 B.C., ultimately accepted Simon, the only remaining Maccabee, as the high priest and ruler of an independent Judah.

Under Hasmonean rule there began a vigorous period of reconstruction led by the able administration of Simon. At this time, Antiochus VII had troubles of his own, as his brother Demetrius II was captured by the Parthians and their throne was about to totter. In need of allied strength Antiochus wrote Simon for help and promised him *the right to coin money*, freedom from debts and tribute to the Syrian crown, and more. Antiochus' letter, sent in 138 B.C., is a remarkable document. It is preserved in *The Book of the Maccabees* and contains edicts that are of interest in our story of ancient Jewish coins. It reads as follows:

King Antiochus to Simon the high priest and prince of his nation, and to the people of the Jews, greeting: Forasmuch as certain pestilent men have usurped the kingdom of our fathers, and my purpose is to challenge it again, that I may restore it to the old estate, and to that end have gathered a multitude of foreign soldiers together, and prepared ships of war, my meaning also being to go through the country that I may be avenged of them that have destroyed it, and made many cities in the kingdom desolate; *now therefore I confirm unto thee all the oblations which the kings before me granted thee*, and whatsoever gift besides they granted. *I give thee leave also to coin money for thy country with thine own stamp* and as concerning Jerusalem and the sanctuary, let them be free; and all the armor that thou hast made, and fortresses, that thou hast built, and keepest in thine hands, let them remain unto thee. And if anything be, or shall be, owing to the king, let it be forgiven from this time forth for ever more. Furthermore, when we have obtained our kingdom, we will honor thee and thy nation and thy temple, with great honor, so that your honor shall be known throughout the world.

In response to these decrees and flattering promises, Simon sent a force of soldiers, arms, and treasure to the aid of Antiochus. But after Antiochus pulled out of his difficulties, he promptly forgot his document and even sent an armed force against his ally Simon. Quickly countering this hostile move, Simon sent his son John Hyrcan to head troops and a small cavalry force against the invaders. With military strategy acquired the hard way and armed determination, the Jews routed the enemy and converted Antiochus' promises into established facts.

In a show of independence the Jews dated documents, contracts, official and public papers according to the year of

Simon. The first year of Simon's rule thus corresponded to the year 170 on the Seleucid calendar. Since this calendar-dating plays a part in numismatic attempts to decipher the ancient Jewish coins, it should be kept in mind.

Among Simon's coin issues, we find none with his name inscribed; but, later generations made up for this omission by minting commemorative coins bearing Simon the Maccabee's name. (See Prototypes II, III, IV on pages 150-55.)

Now we come to one of the challenges and puzzles of numismatic history, namely a series of Jewish coins consisting of silver shekels and copper pieces. The difficulty in assigning them specific dates lies in the fact that they bear no names of the ruler who might have issued them. Despite other inscriptions on these coins which have given rise to a variety of conjectures, we still only know that the coins fall in the ancient period that has been just described. It takes all our skill and knowledge to assemble the many pieces of information into something that enables us to pull back the curtain of time.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Some Case Histories of Ancient Jewish Coins

AFTER READING Antiochus' letter-edict and noting the national independence achieved under Simon, the reader may well expect a coin issue bearing Simon's name. But no such issue exists nor have we been able to find out as yet why Simon did not use his own "stamp" for coin-making. As we will see later, Simon's son (Hyrchan I) was the first of the ancient Jewish rulers to take advantage of this coinage right.

What we are able to prove, though, with some certainty is that in Simon's time there were three kinds of coins minted in Jerusalem (see Figure 1):

The "thick" shekel and halfshekel  
Small bronzes the size of quadrantes  
Small bronzes the size of leptons.

For readers who delight in armchair archeology and historical puzzles, here is a fascinating field. Orthodox numismatists have assigned the coins just mentioned to periods later than that of Simon, and by doing so they have overlooked or minimized significant coin details. The whole coin-dating problem resembles a labyrinth, but we hope to work our way out of it by speculation based on a system of comparison between coin series. Since some of these series are far apart in historic time, the sequence of our narrative will occasionally require that we briefly look ahead or back in order to contrast the series. For example, although we believe that the "thick"





FIGURE 1

Coins in circulation at the time of Simon Maccabaeus. Silver shekel and halfshekel, inscribed in ancient Hebrew letters "Jerusalem the Holy, Shekel of Israel (Halfshekel, resp.)" and numbered "Alef." Small bronze coins in two sizes inscribed in Greek—"King Alexander."



shekel and halfshekel along with the quadrantes and leptons were minted in Simon's time, we will discuss the shekel now and compare it with later series, but save the quadrantes and leptons for analysis after we have unrolled the entire drama of the Hasmonean dynasty.

### *The Shekel Mystery Unveiled*

WEIGHING on the average 14 grams and representing a 4-drachm piece, the "thick" shekel is a Jewish silver coin that belongs in the category of the tetradrachm. Being half this value, the halfshekel is, accordingly, a didrachm piece. Up until now full shekels numbered 1-5 and halfshekels numbered 1-4 have been found, and we do not expect to unearth any of these coins with higher numbers. (Plate I.)

In view of the shape, the inscriptions, and the consecutive numbering from one to five, it seems logical to assume that these shekels were issued by a state which had a solid political foundation during a brief, flourishing period of its life. We believe that these coins, as has been pointed out by some early numismatists, belong to the time of the Maccabees, despite the fact that most of the recent researchers, for various weak reasons, attribute these shekels to the period of the Jews' First Revolt against the Romans (A.D. 66-70), some two hundred years later than the Maccabean era.

What has misled historical numismatists so far is the notion that the shekels were struck within five *consecutive* years. Only by discarding this commonly accepted theory can we turn up details which up until now have escaped thorough examination. And, it is these details which vigorously support the Maccabean period as the one in which the shekels originated.

We might start by examining the shekels which bear the

symbols for numbers 1 and 2, and analyze the differences.

As far as the shape is concerned, the first shekel has its counterpart in coins of neighboring countries. It is flat, and its flan, or body, is no thicker than that of an average coin. The obverse shows a vessel and a legend; the reverse shows a flower with three buds and also a legend. While the contours of the chalice look primitive, as though drawn by a child, the flower is related in style to the flowers that were common to the period of Antiochus (see Figure 6). The flowers on the reverse sides are of the most simple design: each consists only of a big dot and three short, pointed lines.

Certainly, in a broad sense, these motifs were derived from more ancient civilizations. Evidently, the inexperienced minter and his advisers looked about for samples to copy. As for the chalice, they might have been inspired by an old Italic coins (Figure 2, Nos. 1, 2) which also shows the peculiar dots,



FIGURE 2

1. Vessel on Italic coin of about 300 B.C. 2. Vessel on early first shekel. 3. Lily on vase from Knossos. This fleur-de-lis appeared throughout the entire Aegean world on seals, wall paintings, and vases. 4. Flower of the shekel.

one on each side of the featured vessel. The triple flower may have had its earliest prototype or model in a lily from Knossos (see Figure 2, Nos. 3, 4), which was copied and altered slightly in the transfer.

The shortened spelling of the inscription on the reverse emphasizes the primitive character of the design. Furthermore, it may be questioned whether the letter *alef*—meaning numeral 1—stands for a real date and actually means “first year” as it has been supposed.

Besides the shekels pictured in Hill’s catalogue (see Plate I) we have others that show certain variations which will help us to understand the evolution of the shekel series. These variations occur in the first and second full shekels shown on Plate II.

When we compare the second shekel with the first and each of these with the later ones, we find that the chalice, the legend, and the flan have been gradually subject to such changes that we cannot possibly believe them to have occurred suddenly and without a long period of transition. We observe the great improvement in the design of the chalice, which now stands firmly upright. It has a rim decorated with a row of pearls that replaced the two pellets; its base is no longer indicated by a mere line but is executed in detail and apparently copied from an actual object. Care was taken, obviously, to copy the details of a chalice from nature. Since the shape of this chalice differs on a number of coins, the variations may be considered intermediate stages of development. Not only the design but also the lettering was altered and amended.

If, as it has been taken for granted, the shekels were issued in five consecutive years, it follows that the fundamental changes which we have mentioned must have taken place in the first days of the second shekel year. Yet, such a rapid tran-

sition in style and lettering is highly improbable. The facts point to a lapse of several years between the beginning of the first shekel coinage and that of the second. In addition to alterations in design and orthography of the second shekel, the flan underwent a singular transformation. Out of the shape of an ordinary tetradrachm, there developed, step by step, the unusual and peculiar shape of the so-called "thick" shekel. This must have happened during the issue of the second shekel because some survived that were still quite large in diameter and had an irregularly hammered edge. Others exhibit various stages of transition until at last the "thick" shekels appear as a final result of long experimentation.

Although the second shekel reached a high quality, it was surpassed by the third shekel. The third shekel is the finest in the series and represents the highest degree of excellence in the gradually developing series. Beyond this point, a decline is discernible, which apparently started during the issue of the third shekel. The deterioration in the minter's work can easily be discovered. These later coins of the third issue are of poor quality and the craftsmanship is often careless. It is a well-known fact that the subsequent fourth and fifth shekels went even further downgrade.

This development of the shekel series is reflected also in the British Museum Catalogue listing. In the column where the metal size axis is recorded, we find the following measurements:

1st shekel	1.0 and 0.95
2nd shekel	1.0, 0.95, and 0.90
3rd shekel	0.90
4th shekel	0.90 and 0.85
5th shekel	0.90

(All measurements for these full shekels are given in inches. Only one piece is listed for the 5th shekel.)

From what we have noted, it is apparent that the peculiar flan of the "thick" shekel was not a preconceived idea but was gradually developed and perfected during the period of coinage. Its final shape showed a stout but compact flan with a carefully rounded rim and perfectly hammered cone edge, all combined into a flawless shape—a sample of perfect workmanship, unique in ancient coinage. The observations made on the development of the shekel flans are based on the shekel coins in the Wirgin collection. The thirty-six pieces represent one of the largest shekel collections in existence.

All this underlines our belief that the process which saw a modest start toward perfection before a subsequent deterioration could not possibly have taken place in the short span of three years. In considering the facts, we have taken into account the great difference in style, not only between the first and second but also between an early second and a late third shekel; the many intermediate stages of the coin flans; the changes in lettering and, to a limited degree, also in epigraphy or specific inscriptions; and the many slight variations, so familiar to the eye of the expert, that point to progressive perfection.\* On the basis of all these overwhelming supporting points, we may conclude that a long development extending for a period of more than a few years must have attended the history of the shekels.

How then can we explain the numbers one to five that appear on the shekels if we eliminate the possibility of consecutive yearly coinage? Apparently, there is another meaning behind the numeration.

First of all, it is doubtful that the Hebrew letter *shin* pre-

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\* This process can only be observed when a large quantity of shekels is examined. Single pieces or a limited number of shekels would not tell the entire story.



ceding the numerals on the shekels in this case really means *shanah*, or year. In ancient times it was customary to indicate years not by numerals alone but also by a cycle of *shmitta*. Jewish tombstones of the early Byzantine period were found to have been dated from a specific year within the *seven-year-period* of "*shmitta*." † Actually, *shmitta* was the year of exemption, which occurred in intervals of seven years and which, in times of antiquity, was of special religious as well as economic significance to the Jewish people. †† Even today a survival of this tradition is found in Israel.

This year of exemption has three different names, and all three start with the letter *shin*:

<i>Shmitta</i>	Year of Exemption
<i>Shabbat</i>	Sabbatical Year
<i>Shwi'th</i>	the Seventh Year

Each of these names refers to a "seventh year" as seen here.

We come then to the intriguing speculation that the numbering on the shekels may indicate not consecutive years but *shmitta periods*. This means that the second shekel was not struck in the second year but in the second *shmitta* cycle. Long-period cyclical dating was common in ancient days, as we remember that the Greeks, for example, reckoned in Olympiads, or four-year intervals between their Olympic games. The length of the *shmitta* cycle, then, would have allowed sufficient time for the shekels to evolve through many different stages. Also the continuity of the coin issues would be more plausible.

Simon the Maccabee reigned from 170–177 of the Seleucid era. According to the ancient historian Josephus, this

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† See Plate III for a reproduction of inscriptions found on one such tombstone.

†† Cf. *Mishnah*, "Sanhedrin," 5:1.



constituted an exact *shmitta* cycle of seven years or the length of one *shmitta* year to the next *shmitta* year. Simon's son John Hyrcan succeeded him in 177 of the Seleucidan era. Taking all these facts together, we notice that the followings events coincide: *shmitta* year, Hyrcan's succession to the throne, issue of the second series of shekels, and changes in number and design of the coin series.

We have here a chronological pattern that is clearly not accidental. The coinage of the first full shekel matches the seven-year *shmitta* and reign of Simon while the subsequent shekels, numbered from "2" to "5," total a coinage span of twenty-eight years which falls snugly into the period of Hyrcan's rule, 135–105 B.C.

Attached to the chalice design of the shekels is a story that deserves separate telling, and we have reserved for it a section we call "Numismatic Detective Work." At this point, in order to round out the story of the shekels, we wish to call attention to a few items that will help us understand why on some types of the second-shekel issue and all the later ones there appears a pearl rim on the chalice. Actually, as we intend to prove later, the chalice is modeled on the laver that was used at the Temple of Jerusalem during religious rites.

Though the Bible tells us little about the Temple laver, we may definitely say that our vessel is not a drinking cup but a basin constructed to hold ritual water. This latter identification is based on a description given by the *Talmud*, which also talks about a certain Ben-Katin who made twelve stopcocks for the laver.

Taking the vessel to be the Temple laver and assuming the validity of the *Talmud* information, it would be a sounder interpretation to regard the rim of pearls as an illustration of Ben-Katin's gift. The two projections on either side

of the original vessel then would represent the two stopcocks while the new rim of pearls would indicate those stopcocks donated by Ben-Katin. From the meager clues given, it seems that Ben-Katin lived during the era of John Hyrcan I and that his donation took place during the issue of the second shekel.

Several other sources support our belief that the "thick" shekel and halfshekel were coined during Simon and Hyrcan's times. Among them we have the Zion Bronze Coins. Again, there is a wide divergence of views as to the dating of these coins. However, there seems to be general agreement that they were issued sometime during the first century of the Christian era, namely, *after* Simon and Hyrcan's rule. This gives us a sufficient point of reference in comparing the bronzes with the shekels.

### *Which Was First, the Shekel or the Bronze Coin?*

THE BRONZE COIN series of the year 4 is as controversial as the shekel series. On the one hand, it is believed that both series were issued close to each other—either during Hasmonean times, beginning with 139 B.C., or the first Jewish uprising against the Romans in the A.D. 66–70 period. On the other hand, it is claimed that only one of the series can be attributed to the periods mentioned and that they were issued far apart so that the shekels may be Hasmonean and the bronze coins of "revolutionary" vintage or vice versa. This offers four distinct possibilities. Though all four possibilities are elaborately detailed in the literature on Jewish coins, logically only one can be true.

In order to come to a reasonable conclusion, we must solve a crucial question—which came first, the shekel or the

bronze coin? If we succeed in answering this question satisfactorily, the problem of the time of issue of the two series will be closer to a solution.

Our approach to the controversy is based on the assumption that since the smallest and more common coin in the series of the year "4" is very much like the shekels, *one of the types must be a copy of the other*. The startling resemblance of both coins cannot be denied. Doubtlessly, some relation exists between the two designs. The designer of one of the two types must have known or have used as a model the other type when working on his own coin. There is no alternative explanation of their resemblance. It remains now to try to find out which of the coins is the original and which the *copy or restoration*.

The most important part of both designs is the chalice which we have already met. When examining the pictures of the shekels in modern reproduction through collotype printing, it is possible to see the distinctive development of the chalice on the shekels as we have previously noted. In that case, designs were worked out without having a ready model to copy from. But the chalice on the bronze coin is similar to the chalices on the later shekels and is even *more* delicate. It remains unchanged throughout the whole issue. Here we may have the key to the solution of our problem. The shekel cannot have been modeled after the bronze coins because the shekel coiner would have known and used the ultimate shape of the chalice without the development and gradual variation of design that are in evidence on the shekels. Also, the coiner would have used the same design from the very *beginning* of the shekel series. For these reasons, the probability is infinitely greater that the bronze coin is a copy or a restoration of the shekel.

What about the theory that both series are contempo-



FIGURE 3

Which was first? The silver halfshekel compared with a bronze Zion coin from the year 4.

raries? Or, more precisely, that the *fourth* shekel and the bronze series were coined during the same period and by the same people? Sometimes the reason given for the creation of the bronze coins is that the scarcity of precious metal called for the substitution of the bronze coins for the silver shekel, at the same time adapting its design.

In rejecting this theory we must point to the fundamental difference of the inscriptions of the two series. One reads, "The Holy City of Jerusalem," while the other reads, "Deliverance of Zion." Apparently, "The Holy City of Jerusalem" was the minting authority of the silver shekels. When issuing substitutes, it would seem strange that it would fail to mark them the same way. Moreover, the imprint "Deliverance of Zion" does not indicate a minting authority at all. This seriously contradicts the notion that both series have the same origin and were issued at the same time. Remember that the bronze coin is more delicate than the shekel—a fact which becomes obvious when comparing especially the agricultural palm branch, or *lulab*, with the flowers of the shekel. Such notable progress would certainly affect the fourth and fifth shekels, since the coiners of the shekels did not hesitate to improve their designs whenever necessary and advisable. Besides, we should expect to have bronze coins of the fifth year in accordance with the fifth shekel, but no such bronze coins exist.

The historical background and numismatic analysis of the bronze coin series of the year "4" lead us to conclude that it was a later restoration or copy of the silver shekel series issued during the times of Simon and Hyrcan.

Still further support for this conclusion comes from another quarter—the coins issued by King Antigonus. In discussing the Antigonus coins we anticipate our main narrative for the sake of completing the shekel story.

### *The Antigonus Coins*

ANTIGONUS, reigning from 40 to 37 B.C., was the first Jewish king to stamp his royal title on a coin issue. By reviving tradi-



tional designs on the coins he used historic tradition to emphasize their continuity and to show his own place in the Hasmonean lineage. Since he was far from popular, it is likely that his coins were hopefully planned to subtly elicit for himself the same kind of emotion which people evidently felt for the Maccabees. A considerable literature in vogue during his time dealt with the heroic epoch of the Maccabees and offers evidence that their memory was fondly kept alive.

It is no coincidence, then, that the peculiar shapes and sizes of Antigonus' bronze coins exactly match those of the silver shekels which were the products of the first Maccabean and Hasmonean epoch. The parallel designs were deliberately created by Antigonus.

So far, insufficient attention has been paid to the relation of the "thick" silver shekel, which we discussed earlier, and the "thick" bronze coins issued by Antigonus. For that reason, a comparison of these series will help establish a firmer chronological sequence in our ancient-coin dating.

Indeed, how similar in shape is the large bronze coin of King Antigonus to the "thick" shekel! Though he tried to match the characteristics of the shekel, his coin turned out to be a mediocre product that is held in ill repute because of its poor workmanship. The cause for the deficiency lay in the fact that it was cast in pairs in a double mould to obtain the coned edge. As a result, the complementary halves often slipped out of place. However, the diameter as well as the thickness of the shekel and the Antigonus coin are almost identical, and so is the weight. Even a poor sample of the Antigonus coin has a cone-shaped edge, but the well-cast pieces unmistakably assume the shape of a "thick" shekel.

Not only did Antigonus copy the "thick" shekel but he also used the halfshekel as a model. This is verified on exam-

ining coin pieces in good condition. It is also clear that King Antigonus intended to create a monetary system in bronze similar to that of the silver shekel and halfshekel series. The revealing figures taken from the British Museum Catalogue prove that although the individual bronze coin on the average is a little heavier than the silver shekel, the metallic-content ratio was kept as accurate as possible. From this we might conclude that Antigonus would not have introduced his particular monetary system unless he was familiar with the shekels.

Since our analysis leads us inescapably to the conclusion that Antigonus used the silver shekel series as models, they must of necessity have been minted before the year 40 B.C., that is the year when Antigonus began his rule. This theory is given additional support by the conditions that existed during Antigonus' reign. Here was a king who fought desperately against rivals, particularly Herod, and who wished to strengthen his legitimacy and gain popular approval. By adding the Hebrew name of his great-grandfather Mattathias, the founder of the Maccabean movement, to his own coins Antigonus linked himself visually with the people's past. For his political purposes, Antigonus could not have found a more suitable means than the imitation of the shape of the traditional "thick" shekels. (Plate IV.)

Apparently the wholesale coinage of shekels stopped with the third issue, so that the rarity of the fourth and fifth shekels seems to prove that these were not used as currency but had only a kind of symbolic value. The shekels, it must be remembered, were not merely "money" in an economic sense, but represented also religious concepts. Unlike any other Jewish coins issued later, they were marked "Shekel of Israel." The religious quarrels of that period, as related by Jo-

sephus, may well have been instrumental in putting an end to the minting of these coins. Never again has a Jewish coin of later issues ever been called a "shekel."

All this prompts us to support those experts who place the shekels in the Maccabean period. These coins were minted in the pre-Christian era and there is no alternative but that they were struck by the Maccabees. Accordingly, we may say that the first shekel appeared at the time of Simon Maccabee.

## CHAPTER THREE

### The Reign of the Hasmoneans

IN 141 B.C. a Jewish assembly of priests, the people, the nobility, and the elders of the land independently chose Simon the Maccabee and descendant of the Hasmonean family to be high priest, military commander, and civil governor. By popular acclaim and resolution they invested Simon with supreme authority and decreed his rank to be hereditary "forever, until a true prophet should arise." This recognition was tendered Simon for his various accomplishments: taking possession of Joppa's harbor, conquering Gazara and Beth-Zur, re-establishment of Jewish laws, and bringing of material prosperity to the country. In this way a firm foundation was laid for the rule of the Hasmoneans, who play so prominent a part in our story of ancient Jewish coins.

On Simon's death, in 135 B.C., his son John Hyrcan succeeded to the high office. It was a year of tragedy, for Simon, like his four Maccabean brothers, met a violent death. On a military-inspection tour of the fortress Ain-ed-Duk, his ruthlessly scheming son-in-law Ptolemy murdered Simon and two of his sons, and held his wife as hostage. When John Hyrcan tried to storm the fortress near Jericho, he was greeted by the picture of torture inflicted on his mother. This delayed retribution, and after a prolonged siege, Ptolemy abandoned the fortress Duk but killed his hapless victim.

More troubles were in store for Hyrcan during his first year of rule, as the last of the line of strong Syrian kings, Antiochus VII, invaded Judea in full force. The Jewish defenders retreated within the fortified walls of Jerusalem and were

near a breaking point when, shortly before a year was up, the siege was suddenly lifted. Antiochus had Jerusalem in an unbreakable stranglehold, surrounding it with ramparts and trenches that cut off all exits, a fact which makes it unlikely that he ended the war on mild conditions as a result only of negotiations with Hyrcan. It appears that diplomacy won the day for Hyrcan with the success of two delegations sent to Rome. The Roman Senate, with its own purposes in mind, exerted pressure on Antiochus, who yielded. In appealing to Rome, the Jews set a dangerous precedent for themselves. True, the small Jewish state could hardly maintain its independence in the face of militarily stronger neighbors, but calling on the protection of Rome was like admitting a burglar into the home to safeguard valuables. As history was to prove later, alliance and subjection to Roman favor meant the ultimate tragic destruction of the Jewish state.

The historian Josephus in his *Wars of the Jews* paid tribute to Hyrcan by commenting that "he was esteemed of God, worthy of the three privileges—the government of his nation, the dignity of the high-priesthood, and prophecy." Certainly he strengthened the state politically and geographically, subduing the city of Samaria and stabilizing the borders of Shechem and Mount Gerizim.

Records of Hyrcan's public reign are far from complete, and even less is known about the internal affairs of his government. It is here that the coins of the early Hasmonean period help provide us with clues. First, let us take a look at the coins of Hyrcan which have the inscription "Jehochanan." Among these there exists one type inscribed "Community of the Jews" and another type without this inscription. The writing on the latter is rather crude and has an archaic appearance, and it is debated whether the inscription "Community of the Jews" was omitted because no such community existed or



whether the die-engraver was not skilled enough to arrange the relatively large number of letters of the inscription on the small surface of the coin. At any rate, the variation without the word *chever*, or community, must be considered the earlier type; it seems that this variation was the first issue of John Hyrcan.

The coin itself fits into the picture of the country at the time when Hyrcan took over government. It was a country which possessed a provincial and rural simplicity contrasted with the refined Hellenistic, or Greek-influenced, culture of neighboring courts. The unskilled writing of that early coin could be compared with the equally awkward design of the



FIGURE 4

Coin patterns of the Hasmonean Dynasty after Simon.

chalice on the first shekel, which we have attributed to Simon Maccabee. Both coins are equally naïve in their design and mode of representation. As the products of a rustic people, they both betray a hand not too greatly skilled in mastering the engraver's chisel. The writing on the coins gradually improves, however, and the inscription is completed by the addition of the words, "*Chever* of the Jews."

Hyrcan I, who appears as Jochanan in the First Book of the Maccabees, was the first Jewish ruler to have his name engraved on coins. The title which accompanies his name is that of high priest in the tradition of the Jewish commonwealth, whose government was composed of priests. In addition to the

spiritual title, it is noteworthy that Hyrcan made use of his princely prerogatives through coinage.

During Hyrcan's thirty-one-year reign, which has been compared in splendor to King Solomon's, there was one event whose far-reaching consequence he could not foresee. Because of a personal insult he broke with the Pharisees and joined the Sadducean party. Actually, these parties were revivals of earlier factions, which had fought each other bitterly. Their viewpoints differed on theological and political questions, which was one of the reasons that later led to the violent revolution of A.D. 66. Primarily, one might say, the Pharisees envisioned a thoroughly theocratic state favoring a kind of national isolationism, while Sadducees believed in a form of theocratic nationalism that had a worldly outlook.

Hyrcan went so far as to remove the Pharisees from high office in the government, temple, and courts of justice, and to appoint Sadducees in their stead. As a result, the Pharisees and a large segment of the nation which was in sympathy with them began to regard the Hasmonean family with a feeling of hatred. Shortly thereafter, in 105 B.C., the sixty-year-old Hyrcan died, leaving behind him a widow and five sons—Aristobulus, Antigonus, Alexander, Absalom, and another whose name has not come down to us. As in the wake of many other strong rulers, Hyrcan's demise brought with it political discord and power scheming.

John Hyrcan's ill-advised legacy split the unified power he had into a new arrangement by which his widow became the political head of the state, while his eldest son, Aristobulus, became the high priest. Aristobulus I, without encountering opposition, put his mother and all his brothers, except Antigonus, into prison. With them out of the way (his mother was starved to death in prison), Aristobulus, like an oriental des-

pot, took control of the government and assigned his favorite brother, Antigonus, to help run the country.

But the suspicious mind of Aristobulus could not rest, and when his advisers hinted that his brother was intent on seizing the throne, he ordered him to come to the palace unarmed. The bribed messenger failed to mention this proviso to Antigonus and when he arrived customarily armed he was hacked down by Aristobulus' bodyguards. This plunged Aristobulus into repentant moods and helped shorten his own life.

Aristobulus also moved farther away from the spirit of the Maccabees and acquired the title of king that his successors kept down to the very time of Pompey. In addition to their Hebrew names, Hyrcan had attached Greek names to his sons. Though Aristobulus made no secret of his Greek leanings, he used neither his kingly title nor his Greek name on the coins which he issued. These bear the inscription, "The High Priest Jehuda and the Community of the Jews." Further, during his short-lived reign (105-104 B.C.), his military expeditions resulted in subduing the Itureans of Lebanon and annexing Galilee to Judea. The religious fervor of the period was so high that Aristobulus forced the inhabitants of the conquered regions to convert to Judaism, an entirely rare action in Jewish history.

On Aristobulus' death, in 104 B.C., his widow Salome Alexandra released Aristobulus' brothers from prison and married the eldest, Alexander Jannaeus. Alexander ascended the throne and assumed the high-priesthood for a long twenty-six-year period, marked by almost constant civil and foreign wars. Like his father, he hired mercenary soldiers from the Pisidians and Cilicians of southern Asia Minor, and he

would have hired even Syrians if Judean sentiment were not dead-set against such use of former enemies.

For a while military success was with him, as his forces overran coastal towns and cities east of the Jordan, among them Gaza, Strato's Tower, and Dora. But he struck a snag when the besieged city of Ptolemais called on Ptolemy the Cyprian, a son of Egypt's Queen Cleopatra, for assistance. Because of Alexander's poor generalship it looked for a precarious length of time as if Ptolemy would make a complete shambles out of Judea. But Cleopatra, who had recently ousted her ambitious son from Egypt, came to Alexander's rescue. Seeing Alexander's helplessness, she was tempted to swallow up Judea itself were it not for the advice of her Jewish general Ananias, who warned that such treachery would backfire and incite the Egyptian Jews to riot. Cleopatra ordered her army out of Palestine and concluded a treaty with Alexander.

Once the treaty of military alliance was signed, about 98 B.C., Alexander was free again to follow his grand schemes of conquest, without having learned a lesson from his experiences that a number of times led the country to the brink of disaster. He turned his army to the east of the Jordan against the towns of the Moabitis and Galaaditis regions but was trapped in treacherous ravines and unchartered country by the Nabatean King Obedas. With only a shirt on his back Alexander made his way to Jerusalem, where his defeat allowed the Pharisees, who had suffered under Hasmonean rule, to stir up the people of the capital city to open rebellion. From 94 to 89 B.C. there were continuous uprisings suppressed by Alexander's mercenaries until the frenzied Pharisees persuaded Demetrius Eucarus, king of Syria, to send an army against Alexander. Though Alexander was defeated in bloody battle, again he had more luck than he could possibly



deserve. Six thousand Pharisees who had joined Eucarus' army deserted and grouped around Alexander, who wandered desolately in the hills of Ephraim, and finally drove Eucarus out of Judea. They preferred homemade despotism to a foreign yoke.

By this time some fifty thousand men had died in fratricidal strife, yet some Pharisees continued their battle against Alexander. Taking the advice of a Sadducean counselor, Alexander captured and crucified some eight hundred Pharisees, earning the tag "Thracian" for his barbaric butchery. As a result, droves of Pharisees left the country for Egypt and Syria. Despite internal conflicts and external reverses, Alexander managed in the last years of his reign to extend his conquests to numerous provinces and cities and to build formidable fortresses. The conquered and unassimilated cities satisfied more the vanity and battle-thirst of Alexander than would have the gain of any substantial advantage for the country; in fact, these resentful regions proved to be thorns in the side of Judea. Finally, worn out by campaigning and seizures of fever, Alexander died in 78 B.C., honored by most of the populace but placed by the Pharisees on the calendar of memorable dates of joy in commemoration of his death.

Some of the coin issues for which historians and numismatists have given him credit have, we believe, a much earlier origin. Alexander Jannaeus' Hebrew name was Jehonathan and, like other high priests, he used his title on coin issues. Where his Hebrew name and priestly title appear on coins we may be certain that the issue belonged to him. Efforts to attribute any other coins to him are on extremely shaky ground. All this needs a great deal of clarification so that we will save a discussion of these intriguing coins for later.

With the death of Alexander Jannaeus, his widow, Alexandra, succeeded to the throne, having been designated as



regent by her husband. Since women were not permitted to assume the office of priest, Queen Alexandra made her son Hyrcan high priest of the state. In his capacity of high priest, Hyrcan II adopted the Hebrew name of Jehochanan. The co-rulership between mother and son is expressed in the letter *A* on many of the Jehochanan coins, "Jehochanan" standing for the high priest son and the letter "A" for Alexandra, the queen.

Of Alexandra, the historian Josephus, who is not known to have had a flattering attitude toward women, had to admit that "she showed no sign of the weakness of her sex" and, further, that "she preserved the nation in peace." It is said that Alexander on his deathbed asked Alexandra to make peace with the Pharisees, whom he had persecuted for so long. But Alexandra did not need this prompting because her sympathies were with the Pharisees all along. She released those Pharisees who had been imprisoned and pleaded with those who had fled the country to return. During Alexandra's reign, from 78 to 69 B.C., the Pharisees were the real rulers, as they abolished Sadducean laws, forced Sadduceans to give up top political and judicial posts, hounded them as mercilessly as when the shoe was on the other foot. To avoid assassination, some of the military leaders of the Sadducees persuaded Alexandra to allow them to withdraw from Jerusalem and occupy a number of frontier fortresses. This later put the Sadduceans in a strong position when, toward the end of Alexandra's reign, they plotted to put her son Aristobulus on the throne.

In complete contrast to her militant husband, Alexandra avoided attempts to expand her territories and kept away from senseless wars. However, this peaceful interlude served only as cover for quiet consolidation by the Sadducees, who bided their time while the Pharisees brought about religious

and legal reforms and tightened their hold on government. The Pharisees revived religious nationalism in an attempt to obliterate the old influence of the Sadducees.

All the while the Pharisean courts dealt severely with Sadduceans of prominence. It was not hard for the Sadducees to enlist the aid of Alexandra's son Aristobulus, who was secretly eyeing the throne. This prelude to renewed fratricidal conflict came in the midst of a serious warning of external threat in the person of Tigranes, king of Armenia, who had swept over the Syrian empire and was then threatening the frontier fortresses of Judea. Alexandra made short shrift of this new menace by appealing to Rome, which sent its general Lucullus after Tigranes.

With Tigranes out of the way and Alexandra deathly ill, Aristobulus tried to forestall his brother Hyrcan II's succession by forming an army that included Syrian and Jordanian mercenaries and the Sadducean generals who had been put in charge of a string of Judean fortresses. When Alexandra died in 69 B.C., she was to be the last of the virtually independent rulers of Judea—a fate for which internal dissension was to blame.

After Alexandra, the Sadducees and the Pharisees—each party led by the opposing brothers, Aristobulus II and Hyrcan II—were at one another's throats in a civil war that eventually led to fatal foreign intervention. By right of primogeniture, or the privilege of the first-born of the family, Hyrcan received the crown but he was too weak-willed, indecisive, pliable, and ready to accept wrong advice so that he temporarily lost the throne. Diametrically opposed in character was the headstrong younger brother Aristobulus, who marched on Jerusalem to claim with might the crown which did not belong to him by right. In a battle near Jericho Aristobulus

won. He reserved the crown for himself, and by marrying Hyrcan's daughter he hoped to cement his rule.

Things might have come to a peaceful conclusion were it not for Antipater, an Idumean of a noble family which had been forcibly converted to Judaism. In addition to his office as one of the regional governors, he became the evil angel of Hyrcan, constantly firing his anger against the upstart brother. Finally Antipater talked Hyrcan into conspiring with Aretas Philhellene, king of the Nabateans, who in return for wild promises of territorial concessions marched into Judea with an army of fifty thousand men, defeating Aristobulus decisively in 66 B.C. and bringing general chaos and famine into the country.

For some years Rome had been sending expeditions into Syrian and neighboring territories with the intent of annexing them. Since Damascus was subdued in 65 B.C. one of Pompey's generals, Scaurus, looked for new fields to conquer and his eye lit on Judea. Both Aristobulus and Hyrcan saw a potential ally in Scaurus but he threw his favors in the direction of Aristobulus in consideration of a gift of 400 talents or the equivalent of about a half-million dollars. All Scaurus had to do was to threaten Aretas with the power of Rome and he withdrew from Judea. It was not only the handsome bribe that prompted Scaurus' action but also Rome's strategy to keep any power from becoming too strong in Asia.

Aretas' retreat went to Aristobulus' head, and suffering from delusions of grandeur, he sent expeditions into neighboring territories and kept privateers on the seas. As a sign of independence he struck coins but, like his predecessors, he did not use his royal title on them. It is assumed that Aristobulus called himself "Jonathan the High Priest."

Antipater, who had attached himself to the weaker of the two Hasmonean brothers, made sure that Hyrcan did not

consider the affair closed, and he kept his hopes high for changes in events. Meanwhile Aristobulus thought that he could assure himself of Rome's protection by making further extravagant gifts to Pompey, such as an artistically fashioned gold vine worth 500 talents that was exhibited at the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus. Though Pompey accepted this flattering tribute that symbolized his power and demonstrated his prestige, he proved fickle to Aristobulus' cause. In 63 B.C. Pompey was on the march again, subduing cities in Lebanon and making his way toward Damascus. In a humiliating spectacle representatives of three Jewish parties met Pompey near Damascus and pleaded their individual cause. Aristobulus defended his kingship on the grounds of fitness; Hyrcan claimed the throne as a matter of hereditary right; and the people, who were tired of both brothers, demanded dissolution of the monarchy and a return of the theocratic system under the guidance of priests.

Pompey listened carefully to all parties and arrogantly played a cat-and-mouse game which made Aristobulus so fidgety that instead of joining Pompey in a campaign against the Nabateans as planned he took to his heels. Pompey immediately wheeled his army and pursued Aristobulus clear to Jerusalem. There he took Aristobulus captive and on the Sabbath Day of Atonement subdued the holy city of Jerusalem. He mercilessly slaughtered the resisters of Aristobulus' party and reduced the boundaries of the Jewish state. Of course, Jewish independence was now at a complete end, and Jewish political and cultural life was primarily restricted to Judea and Galilee, separated from each other by the strip of Samaria and cut off from the main coast by a number of Greek cities. Idumea to the south and some conquered cities east of Jordan remained under Jewish rule. These territories were placed under the rule of Hyrcan II, who governed as Roman



tributary. Hyrcan was not allowed to assume the title of king, which came into being with the reign of the Hasmonean Jehuda Aristobulus, but he was able to take the office of high priest.

This office, however, conferred by Pompey upon Hyrcan II, was now made strictly nonpolitical. The behind-the-scenes operator Antipater finally was rewarded with an appointment as Roman procurator and in effect had greater power than Hyrcan. Since all that remained for Hyrcan was the priestly office, it can be logically concluded that the minting of coins bearing the name "Jehochanan the High Priest" was resumed at that historical time.

One event of cultural significance that should be noted came on the heels of Pompey's entry into the Temple of Jerusalem. Syrian and Egyptian writers had spread all sorts of rumors throughout the ancient world to the effect that the Temple contained idolatrous images. Pompey was able to dispel these rumors and testify that the monotheistic Jews believed in an invisible God who was not represented by any sculptural or pictorial images.

Though for the time being the Temple was spared from destruction, the Jewish state became a Roman province. As a footnote to this period, the dethroned Aristobulus and many other prominent Jews were paraded as captives in a triumphal Roman procession. But some of them were soon ransomed and persuaded to settle in Rome, where they formed the nucleus of a Jewish community.

Subject to the whims of Roman officials and the arbitrary acts of Antipater, who sought Rome's favor by supplying Jewish soldiers for its continuous military expeditions, the people welcomed Alexander II, the oldest son of Aristobulus II, who had escaped from Roman captivity. In 59 B.C. he



marshaled a considerable force, took over Jerusalem and fortified it. Also, he temporarily ousted Antipater. As for coins, we have none that we can assign to Alexander II, probably because of his limited tenure, which did not allow him to set up a real regime.

On Antipater's complaint, Rome removed Alexander and decided to split Judea into five purely geographical regions and break up any semblance of political unity. The commonwealth which had been governed as a single unit now was converted into districts ruled by councils of internal affairs called Sanhedrin, with seats in the capitals of Jerusalem, Gazara, Amathus, Jericho, and Sepphoris. From then on, the political destiny of Judea fluctuated along with the internal upheavals of Rome caused by the power struggle among the generals.

After the division of Judea, Hyrcan II was allowed the care of the Temple only. What little was left of his political power disappeared for the time being. But the spirit of Jewish revolt did not subside, and Josephus reports that as a result of uprisings in 53–51 B.C. some 30,000 of the rebels were captured and sold as slaves by the Romans. When in 49 B.C. the break came between Pompey and Caesar, the whole eastern world was shaken by the ensuing Roman civil wars which lasted about twenty years. During that time Judea experienced the rule of four different Roman regimes which contrived to keep the state in constant chaos. Of course the provinces suffered heavily, as the Romans chose to deplete treasuries and manpower for the cause of war. After the death of Pompey in battle, Hyrcan II made one of the few correct choices of his entire career when he allied himself with Caesar. Throughout his early campaigns, Hyrcan aided Caesar

by sending him troops and calling on Egyptian Jews to side with him against Ptolemy, the Egyptian king who had defied Rome.

Grateful Caesar, in the wake of his victories, gave Judea control of the vital port of Joppa and honored Hyrcan II by elevating him to the rank of *ethnarch*, or hereditary head, of the Jewish nation and acknowledged his position as high priest. Almost immediately the elated Hyrcan added his new title to the inscriptions of the coins which he issued. These coins bear the titles High Priest and *Rosh*, which signifies head of the Jewish community.

Though Hyrcan possessed the impressive title "ethnarch" and deluded himself into thinking that he held political power, it was Antipater who held the real strings of government because Caesar had confirmed him as procurator of Judea. Knowing that the history of Rome was such that a ruler's tenure was all too uncertain, Antipater used his political skill to persuade the Roman Senate to issue an official decree that proclaimed the Judeans allies of Rome and gave its sanctions to the privileges granted to Judea by Pompey. This had wide-ranging effects on the provinces under Roman control in that they were compelled to permit religious freedom to their Jewish inhabitants in line with the example set by Caesar. So sure was Antipater of his power that he began to play a game of political nepotism by appointing his oldest son, Phasaël, governor of Jerusalem and Judea and his twenty-five-year-old son Herod as governor of Galilee.

As governor of Galilee, Herod gave evidence of the despotic streak in his character that was to terrorize the entire nation later when he gained the throne. One of the first things he did as governor was to capture an armed group led by one Hezekiah who organized small-scale insurrections against the Romans. The Romans were appreciative, but

Jewish sentiment was outraged when Herod beheaded Hezekiah and all of his followers. Such sentencing belonged to the tribunal of the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, which, on public demand, decided to call Herod on the carpet for his high-handed action. Most of the judges were intimidated by his overbearing attitude and military bodyguard, but the famous Pharisee Sameas refused to knuckle under and roared, "Does not he, accused of a capital offense, stand before us as though he were ready to murder us at once if we found him guilty?" With these indignant words the tribunal was shocked into action and would have imposed the death penalty if Hyrcan, in a state of panic, had not adjourned the trial. After Hyrcan had been warned by the Romans that Herod was not to be harmed, he, with haste inspired by fear, persuaded Herod to flee Jerusalem.

The resourceful Herod rushed to Damascus, where he bought a generalship from Sextus Caesar, the Roman governor of Syria, and soon was ready to march against Jerusalem with an army. His father and brother restrained him with difficulty from carrying out his intentions for the time being. Instead, he helped Sextus Caesar subdue Syria. When Sextus was killed and Julius Caesar was assassinated two years afterwards, in 44 B.C., Herod lost his protectors. But he applied his talents as a tax collector for the Romans with such enthusiasm in Galilee that the Roman successors of Caesar reinstated him as general of Coele-Syria and provided him with land and sea forces. The unappreciative inhabitants of Galilee, however, were roused to sporadic rebellions that continued for almost an entire century.

What had been obvious to everyone finally became obvious even to Hyrcan, namely that Antipater and his brood had designs on nothing less than the throne. His suspicions aroused, he turned to a well-known public figure, Malich, for

help. Malich wasted no time. He bribed Antipater's cup-bearer, and succeeded in poisoning the master politician. Herod countered this move by having Roman assassins remove Malich. Then came the first attempt to do away with the Idumean brothers, Herod and Phasael, by the armed force of Antigonus, the son of Aristobulus II. When this failed, Herod, stronger than ever, swaggeringly returned to Jerusalem, where Hyrcan with bitter humbleness had to award him a victory decoration. In sheer desperation Hyrcan tried to win over Herod by offering him the hand of his granddaughter, the famed beauty Mariamne.

Further upheavals in the Roman empire saw the suicides of Brutus and Cassius, giving way to the Second Triumvirate, consisting of Octavius, Antony, and Lepidus. In 41 B.C. several Judean delegations made representation to Mark Antony against the oppressions of Herod and Phasael. But Herod's gifts of tongue and gold, and favorable words from the muddled Hyrcan, caused Antony to vest full political power in the Idumean brothers and confer on them the title of *tetrarch* (a name commonly given to subordinate Roman princes). Antony showed where he stood even more concretely by imprisoning or executing some of the members of the Judean delegation who had come to protest. Acts of this kind abetted by heavy taxation only fanned nationalistic and anti-Roman sentiment among the Jews to a point where they were receptive to leaders who called for rebellion.

One man might have turned the historical tide of Judea if he had had but a fraction of Herod's tremendous energy and resourcefulness, and that was Antigonus, son of Aristobulus II. As it was, we have the peculiar declension of a man who started out as a hero, deteriorated into a fool, and succumbed a coward.



While Mark Antony dallied with Egypt's Cleopatra in 40 B.C., neglecting affairs of state for affairs of love, Antigonus seized the opportunity to fulfill his ambition of seizing the throne of Judea. Promising fabulous sums of money—and women as an extra incentive—to the Parthians, he readily obtained foot soldiers and cavalry. Coupled with these forces were patriotic Judeans who wanted to rid the country of the Idumean brothers. They launched a two-pronged attack along the coastal plains and the interior, finally achieving their aim not by fighting but through calculated cunning. Not knowing what the Parthians were up to, Hyrcan and Phasael, despite the caution urged by Herod, walked into the Parthian camp. Rather than face torture, Phasael killed himself while Hyrcan submitted to having his ears cut off—a mutilation which would disbar him from priestly office—and was carted off to Babylon as a temporary captive.

Momentarily beaten, Herod fled Jerusalem; but even when on foreign soil he was fiercely determined to return. This left the field clear for the Parthians to ravage Jerusalem and the surrounding regions until they had their fill. When they left, Antigonus entered an uneasy three-year reign as high priest and king of Judea. He was the first Jewish king to have the title “king” stamped on his coins. The reasons for this departure from traditional precedence may be found in the political events of his time. After being helped to power by the Parthians, self-conscious Antigonus wanted to demonstrate graphically that he was in every way a king.

From all indications, Antigonus did not exert leadership to obtain sufficient loyalty and unity on the part of the people. In fact, his unfortunate lack of vigorous personality and administrative capabilities encouraged divided views among the people concerning his kingship. Wishing to improve his position and to gain popular favor, he exploited the poten-



tialities of coins in true public-relations fashion. In this he apparently anticipated the Romans who, in the absence of newspapers and wide-circulation media of information, used coins to propagandize the rulers in power and encourage personality cults.

Antigonus issued copper shekels and halfshekels with the inscriptions "King Antigonus" in Greek and "Mattathias the High Priest" and "Community of the Jews" in Hebrew. His small lepton coins were inscribed with the name "Mattathias" and appeared only in Hebrew. Cleverly he put on his coins those symbols and inscriptions which directly or indirectly supported his royal position as the legitimate aspirant and which he felt would strengthen his rule through popular respect.

For these reasons he used on his coins the name of Mattathias, a venerated figure in Jewish history, who in the minds of the people recalled the heroic period of the Maccabees. By this obvious association, Antigonus hoped to link his own name to the glory symbolized by Mattathias, the founder of the Hasmonean line. In reviving tradition to serve his personal advantage, Antigonus also used the old symbol of the cornucopiae, or horns of plenty, the wreath, and priestly-formula inscriptions. Finally, using copper, he imitated the old monetary system signified by the so-called "thick" shekels and even reproduced their flans, or body size. This revival is especially significant for numismatists because it brings conclusive proof that the "thick" shekels originated in times before Antigonus.

Among the many "ifs" in Jewish history, Antigonus' reign is one of much speculation: If, for example, he had taken advantage of the political turmoil in Rome and formed alliances for the country's sake; if he had united the rebellious mountaineers of Galilee, who supported his cause, with

the many partisans-in-arms and outfitted them from the dispersed arsenals of the country; if he had faced up to and countered the diabolic moves of Herod behind the scenes in Rome, where he was in exile. . . . But he did none of these things. Instead, he frittered away his energies on minor details of state and was hopelessly unprepared when Herod, with the help of Rome, nibbled away at Judea by conquering such strategic areas as Galilee until reaching the gates of Jerusalem in 37 B.C.

By then it was much too late to think about decisive action, and Antigonus was led to Antioch in chains, groveling with self-pity and imploring the mercy of his captors. But there was to be no mercy, as Herod decided on a drastic demonstration that opposition to his rule in the future would be highly risky. At his request, Antony gave orders that Antigonus be publicly whipped, taken to the block and beheaded. For the Romans this act was unique, since it marked the only time up to then that a captive king was executed. With one stroke of the ax, then, the century-long reign of the princely Hasmoneans came to an end and a new era was ushered in.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### More Case Histories

AS PART of the historical sketches of the Hasmonean dynasty, we have mentioned in the previous chapter the coin type issued by each ruler. Up until now the coins in question have been assigned and arranged quite differently, a challenge which we will meet by showing how we arrived at a new classification and sequence.

Among the coins inscribed with the names of the high priests there are variations whose characteristics have never been analyzed with convincing results. Throughout our story of ancient Jewish coins, analyses of the distinct characteristics of these variations prove invaluable in helping us to attribute coins to princes who, strangely enough, were assumed not to have issued any. The coins issued by the high priests, for example, exhibit widely different script types, just like an array of printing types in use today. It should be visualized in this connection that in antiquity most coins bore the portrait of a sovereign or were adorned with the image of a god. In the Jewish coins of the high priests, the pictorial element was eliminated and replaced by elaborate inscriptions. To compensate for this, the execution of the inscriptions received special attention. The different coin types display the classic Semitic script and are beautifully styled. Considering the effort today's printers expend in creating artistic lettertype, we must give full credit to the dedication of the ancient scribes and designers to their coin craft, which we reproduce in its amazing variety on Plate V.

This calls for a broad discussion of the High Priest Coins and their name inscriptions. When we come to Alexander

Jannaeus, we find that some coin series have been erroneously attributed to his rather than to far earlier periods. In order to set this matter straight, we will pick up an early part of our story of ancient Jewish coins where we said that the small bronze coins of quadrante and lepton size were already in existence in Jerusalem during Simon's time.

Among the coins attributed to Alexander Jannaeus there is one which has caused a great deal of excitement and speculation, namely the so-called Widow's Mite. We believe that this coin too has an earlier vintage and deserves a full account.

### *The High Priest Coins*

CURRENT numismatic handbooks and catalogues are content to attribute coins uncritically to Hasmonean high priests and princes on the basis of name inscriptions found on the coins. As a result the following has become a typical listing:

<i>Name on the Coins</i>	<i>Hasmonean Issuer</i>
Jehochanan	Hyrcan I
Jehuda	Aristobulus I
Jehonathan	Alexander Jannaeus
Jonathan	{ Alexander Jannaeus
	{ Hyrcan II
Mattathias	Antigonus

Apparently the only doubt and difference of opinion admitted in this listing is the fact that some numismatists attribute the coins inscribed "Jonathan" to Alexander Jannaeus while others assign them to Hyrcan II.

Our dissatisfaction with such listings—which are convenient oversimplifications—goes much deeper. Particularly, we are disturbed by the fact that the listing of Hasmonean-coin issuers is decidedly incomplete.

If we go a bit further and draw on ancient sources, we come up with a more complete parade of names of ruling high priests and princes of the Hasmonean house, a dynasty founded by Simon Maccabee:

Hyrcau I	135-105 B.C.
Aristobulus I	105-104 B.C.
Alexander Jannaeus	104-78 B.C.
Alexandra	78-69 B.C.
Aristobulus II	69-63 B.C.
Hyrcau II	63-40 B.C.
Antigonu	40-37 B.C.

Some Hebrew names of these rulers are found in Jewish literature. Hyrcan I appears as Jochanan in the First Book of the Maccabees. The ancient historian Josephus says of Aristobulus I that he also had the name of Judah, while about Queen Alexandra it is related that she bore the Jewish name of Salome.

Josephus' accounts, however, are silent as to the Hebrew names of the other Hasmoneans. His only further reference is to King Jannaeus as having the name also of Alexander. Since Josephus is virtually the sole source of knowledge about this period, no Hebrew names of Alexander Jannaeus, Aristobulus II, Hyrcan II, and Antigonus have come down to us.

All this seriously challenges the validity of the traditional catalogue listings of coins of the Hasmonean period. These listings give the impression that not all Hasmonean rulers may be credited with the issuing of coins. But, as we have seen, coinage was one of the fondest of royal prerogatives. It appears strange, therefore, that only some of the historically known princes should have issued coins.

There are still other clues which permit inference as to the probable issuer of specific coins. For example, the coins



with the name of "Jehochanan" exist in four different types. The first type bears only the name of Jehochanan with the title high priest. The second, in addition to the name and title, is also inscribed "Chever of the Jews"—*chever* meaning "community." A third type bears the Greek letter *A* towering above the inscription. On the fourth type the high priest is referred to as *Rosh* of the Jews—*rosh* meaning "head." Similar to the English sense, *rosh* refers to a chairman or director of a public or corporate body. However, nowhere in numismatic literature has a satisfactory interpretation been given of either the presence of the letter *A* or the word *Rosh* on these coins.

The new interpretation we offer in regard to the variation in coin inscriptions assumes that on the third type the letter *A* together with the name Jehochanan stand for a duality of concepts. As we have already pointed out, the co-rulership of Judea by Queen Alexandra and High Priest Hyrcan II (her son, who adopted the Hebrew name Jehochanan) was appropriately symbolized on their coins: *A* must be taken to mean Alexandra while Jehochanan represents Hyrcan II.

In the case of the fourth type, the word *Rosh*, as a title, becomes important for those who study the coins of the Hasmonean period. The title may have served to differentiate between a Jehochanan who possessed this special and additional title and another Jehochanan who did not. It must be assumed, therefore, that a title of this kind when stamped on coins was related to an actual rank and power based on factual events.

We do not agree with other writers' assumption that the names Jehonathan and Jonathan both apply to the same person or that sometimes the full name was used and at other times the abbreviated one. If their imaginary principle of abbreviation were true, we also would expect to find a short-

ened form of Jehochanan, for example; yet, no coin exists that carries the short-spelled name Jochanan. We therefore make the reasonable claim that Jehonathan and Jonathan are names of two different princes.

Efforts to determine the issuers of the coins bearing the names of the high priests must of course start with the Hebrew names recorded in the original literary sources. For some of the Hasmonean rulers we have a record of their Hebrew names, while those of the others have not come down to us. However, these sovereigns too must have had Hebrew names. It was traditional for them to receive Greek names at birth, but when they took office as high priests they assumed Hebrew names, much as modern royalty changes names with new offices to proclaim the continuity of their dynasty.

Since identification and dating of coins on the basis of the inscriptions giving Greek and Hebrew names of the Hasmoneans have their limits of application, we are justified in placing especial emphasis on the variations among coins of the same series to obtain a basis for new classifications.\*

### *The Jewish "Alexander" Coins: A Classic Case of Mistaken Identity*

SO FAR we have looked at the coins that existed at the time of Simon and those of the high-priest successors. For Simon we listed the silver shekel and a pair of bronze coins which belong to the group of the Jewish "Alexander" types. Few coins have a more exciting background than these series inscribed with the Greek legend "King Alexander's."

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\* The main table of the new classification may be found in Appendix I. Inscription variations are reproduced in Figure 5.

4484Z  
 414444  
 249984  
 7244

1.

(יהוחנן)  
 הכהן הגדל  
 וחבריה  
 (הדים)

4444Z  
 414444  
 998444  
 244Z

2.

(יהו דה)  
 הכהן גד  
 ול וחכר  
 היהוד  
 (ים)

444Z  
 414444  
 984444  
 9429  
 72

3.

(יהונתן הכהן)  
 הגדול וחבר  
 (היהדים)

A  
 448444  
 414444  
 449984  
 444444

4.

(יהוחנן)  
 הכהן הגד  
 ל וחבר הי  
 (הודים)

444444  
 414444  
 249984  
 244  
 7

5.

(ינתן הכהן)  
 הגדל וחבר  
 (הדים)

444Z  
 414444  
 444444  
 2498  
 244

6.

(יהוחנן)  
 הכהן הגדל  
 וחבריה  
 (הדים)

444Z  
 414444  
 444444  
 844  
 4

7.

(יהו)  
 חנן הכה  
 ן הגדלר א  
 (שהחבר)

444444/444444

44

8.

מתתיה הכהן הגדול חבר היהודים.

FIGURE 5

The Hebrew inscriptions on the bronze coins of Hasmonean high priests in ancient type.

1. Jehochanan, 2. Jehuda, 3. Jehonathan, 4. Jehochanan, 5. Jonathan, 6. Jehochanan, 7. Jehochanan, 8. Mattathias.

"The writing on Jewish coins from the Maccabean age to Bar-Kochba's revolt is a derivative of the early Hebrew alphabet. . . . It is probable that the early Hebrew alphabet continued to be used among certain sections of the population for some centuries after the Aramaic language and script had become the official means of communication [in the postexilic period]." (Diringer, *The Alphabet*, page 243.) See also Figure 34.

In dealing with them and attempting to track down the circumstances surrounding their origin, we must briefly talk about the minting offices in ancient Jerusalem. During Simon's reign, three different coining offices were employed: one handled the silver coinage and the other two were responsible for the bronzes. Later on, the silver mint also took over the high-priest bronzes; yet, the two "Alexander" mints that survived continued to operate separately and to produce their particular types.

It may sound odd that more than one competitive minting office existed in Jerusalem, but this seems to be borne out by archeological facts. These allow us to conclude that the Jewish "Alexander" coins were produced over a period of several hundred years, a longevity which is strikingly similar to the Greek tetradrachm having the Alexander pattern.

Within this long span of minting activity, there also falls the ruling period of the Jewish King Alexander Jannaeus. To him we assigned in the previous chapter the small bronzes inscribed "High Priest Jehonathan." However, one of the mistakes made in the traditional cataloguing of coins has been the assigning of the "Alexander" types also to King Jannaeus. The reasons for this wrong coin identification are the linking of the "Alexander" inscription on the coins with the *Alexander* surname of Jannaeus and the arbitrary equation of the Hebrew name inscription "Jehonathan" with the Greek name "Jannaeus." As we note, some of the coins are inscribed "King Jehonathan" in Hebrew, leading many numismatists to attribute them to *King* Jannaeus; but, these particular coin specimens are too far in the minority to allow such speculation.

We believe with certainty that the inscription "King Alexander's" actually refers to King Alexander the Great and not King Alexander Jannaeus.

The next question then is: Who was King Jehonathan? In regard to this we should resort to the evidence held by the Jewish coin series themselves. Besides Jannaeus we have the following royal personages:

King Jehuda Aristobulus  
Queen Salome Alexandra  
King Jonathan Aristobulus  
King Mattathias Antigonus.

None of these rulers coupled his *Hebrew* name on the coins with the title of King. Antigonus was the only one to use the title on his coins, but he used it as part of an inscription written in *Greek*. All this seems to have been the established pattern, so that it is logical that Jannaeus too followed suit. On the basis of this, two possibilities offer themselves: Jannaeus, contrary to custom, overrode minting officials and required them to immortalize him on the coins; or, the inscription in Hebrew reading "King Jehonathan" referred to an altogether different person who as yet has not been identified.

In order to work out this problem more clearly, we turn to the intriguing sun-wheel-, star- and flower-coin groups.

#### THE SUN-WHEEL TYPE

Of the sun-wheel type there are six varieties, some of which have not been published before. Here are tables of the type with a description of the obverse and reverse sides of the coins. For illustrations see Plate VI.

To make the sun-wheel type of coin yield its history, we must consider every detail of the variations. The anchors show certain changes and have differing arrangements of the crossbars. This indicates a technical development which reaches its last stage on one of the Herodian (37 B.C.—A.D. 6)



TABLE I

<i>Obverse</i>	<i>Reverse</i>
1. Legend in Greek: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ (King Alexander's); anchor without crossbar	Sun wheel without Hebrew in- scription
2. Same legend: anchor with single crossbar	Same as No. 1
3. Same legend: anchor with two crossbars, one above and one in the middle	Same as No. 1
4. Same legend: anchor the same as on No. 3	Sun wheel with Hebrew in- scription "King Jehonathan"
5. Same legend: anchor with double crossbar in the mid- dle	Sun wheel with the same He- brew inscription
6. Same legend: anchor with double crossbar in the mid- dle	Sun wheel without Hebrew in- scription

coins, where the anchor has a ring at the end like the one used on anchors up to the present. (See Figure 9.)

The development of the anchor should not be disregarded on the grounds that it was designed one way at some time and another way at a different time. Proofs for the error in this conclusion are demonstrated by the Seleucid coins struck in Jerusalem in the year 181 of the Seleucid era (132/31 B.C.), and the coins of Herod and his sons, whom we will meet later.



FIGURE 6

Coins of King Antiochus VII, minted in Jerusalem about 132 B.C.

The anchors on all these coins remained identical on the complete array of varieties. Once the anchor was adopted, it remained unchanged on each of the respective coin types.

To our knowledge, the varieties of anchors on the coins illustrated here are the first ever published. They refute the idea that changes appearing in the anchor-wheel type were purely accidental and strengthen our theory that the Jewish "Alexander" coins underwent a long development. Anchors without the crossbar were the only ones locally in use at the time the coin was originated or when the original design was simplified for purposes of coining. All facts point to early primitive workmanship and confirm the assumption that these coins were issued *before* the year 181 of the Seleucid era (132/31 B.C.), because during that year there appeared the anchor with one crossbar, the so-called Seleucid anchor, which is found on coins struck in Jerusalem by Antiochus VII. (See Figure 6.)

Whatever symbolic meaning is read into the sun wheel and the anchor, it must be remembered that these motifs have a very ancient origin. The wheel, for instance, is found on Athenian coins of the sixth century B.C., while the anchor may already be seen on the early silver coins from Apollonia Pontica, in the Mediterranean region. However, the anchor and the wheel as the obverse and reverse of the same coin appear only on Etruscan coins dating from the beginning of the third century. (Plate VI.)

As we can see, there were models for the anchor-wheel coins far back in antiquity.

Only two of the varieties bear the name of King Jehonathan on the reverse. Sometimes the individual pieces of the two varieties display differences in that the king's name often is missing. These omissions indicate that there was no compelling reason to add the Hebrew name of "Jehonathan" to

the Greek "Alexander," so that it seems quite clear that Alexander actually was never identical with Jehonathan. There is no doubt that the coins having anchors without a crossbar, or with only one crossbar, are earlier varieties than those with two crossbars. Furthermore, the Hebrew inscription is never found on these earlier coins. This is not surprising because evidently the sun wheel originally was not intended to bear any inscription whatever. There are only eight spaces between the spokes of the wheel, whereas the inscription has ten letters. Consequently, in two places two letters had to be squeezed into a single space. This was a make-shift arrangement, and a rather poor one at that. It certainly was not a practical arrangement of letters because it made reading difficult. Had the design from the very outset been made to provide for the inclusion of the inscription "King Jehonathan" the coiner undoubtedly would not have failed to adapt it properly to the inscription as it was done in the case of the flower type discussed later.

In offering a new interpretation of these coins, we lay particular stress on three points: the rather poor and primitive design of the anchor on the earliest coins; the sun wheel which, as shown, was not intended to bear any inscriptions; and the existence of the early Etruscan model.

These facts sufficiently support our opinion that *the Alexander coins with the sun wheel actually originated during the times of Alexander the Great, before 323 B.C., or shortly thereafter*. It is well known that for generations after Alexander the Great, coins with his head or pattern continued to be struck. The possibility, therefore, that the Jews followed the general usage does not seem remote. The first Alexander coins were issued in Jerusalem either during the lifetime of Alexander or slightly later, during the rule of the Ptolemies in Palestine.

The memory of Alexander the Great was vivid and alive among the Jews. A good illustration of this is the First Book of the Maccabees, which begins with an account of his deeds. Considering the great advance of Hellenistic culture in the Near East at that time, it is not surprising to see also the Jewish people affected by the Greek influence. Placing these coins in the times of Alexander helps to explain the many changes to which the coin was subjected. *The greater the number of varieties found, the longer we may assume the type to have been in circulation.* In this respect it may well be recalled that prolonged coining of traditional emblems was also found elsewhere during the Hellenistic period.\* As the historian B. V. Head notes, the types become "more and more conventional in style, this in part due to the exigencies of an enlarged commerce, which demanded a fixity and uniformity of type fatal to originality of conception and design on the part of the die-engraver. This is especially noticeable in the Ptolemaic series, where the stereotyped head of Ptolemy Soter is repeated with wearisome similarity for no less than two centuries and a half." †

### THE STAR TYPE

The next group in the series of the Alexander coins has, on the reverse, a star and a legend. As a type, it has vital significance for the history of Jewish coinage.

The customary classification of these coins would lead us to believe that this type would show the inscription "King Jehonathan"; but this is not the case. Even on well-preserved pieces the writing is unintelligible despite the fact that it is

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\* Of the most prominent examples of this is the owl-tetradrachm series of ancient Athens, which was minted for several centuries, and the Ptolemaic series.

† *Historia Numorum*, p. lix.

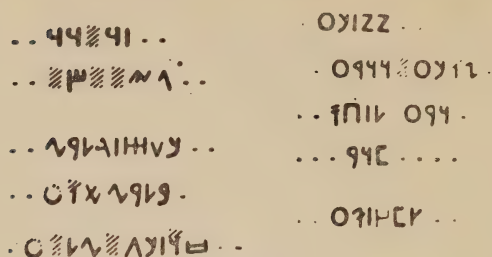


FIGURE 7

Samples of the illegible script on the Alexander leptons.

clearly visible. This ceases to be puzzling once we understand that the writing is not Hebrew at all, but offers clues to several problems concerning coinage in Jerusalem.

On the star coin the alphabet letters of the legend are partly Hebrew, partly Phoenician—both archaic—and feature several strange elements. Despite the mixture of Hebrew and Phoenician letters it is impossible to decipher the writing, a fact which need not disturb us because apparently they were not meant to be read.

Actually, among hundreds of coins in the Wirgin and other large collections there does not exist a single coin showing a complete inscription—only fragments can be found on each specimen. It is even doubtful whether two or more pieces could be singled out as having an identical number of similar letters. This may readily be seen by the sampling of Figure 7. The fact that people stamped such strange and unintelligible script on coins would seem amazing unless one understands that it was designed to be a symbol rather than a legend.

For us it is important to note that the star-type coin has the same varieties as does the sun-wheel type. Not only does



the anchor show changes and different shapes, but the star changes likewise and the legend even more frequently.

Of the star-type coins there are two main groups: one shows a star with six rays, the other shows a star with eight rays. These details may be observed in the following illustrations. (See Plate VII.)

TABLE II

<i>Obverse</i>	<i>Reverse</i>
(a) Anchor in the shape of a trident without crossbar, single indistinct Greek letters	Six rays, dots between the rays, no legend
(b) Plain straight anchor without crossbar, legend the same as on <i>a</i>	Six rays, dots between the rays, no legend
(c) Heavy anchor without crossbar, fragments of the Alexander legend	Eight rays, on some specimens there are a few scattered letters
(d) Anchor with one crossbar, fragments of the Alexander legend	Eight rays, on most specimens a legend — sometimes short, sometimes longer but always neatly engraved
(e) Anchor with two crossbars — one above and one in the middle, legend the same as on <i>d</i>	Same as <i>d</i>

This table does not list all the existing varieties because they are innumerable. The different types are not clearly distinct from each other; there are transitional stages between the six main groups. We come therefore to the conclusion that these numerous varieties are evidence of the evolution of a traditional pattern. The unintelligible legend on the

reverse and the fact that some of the groups have no legend at all rule out the possibility of a connection with King Alexander Jannaeus. If there were such a connection, it would be completely incomprehensible why these coins should have an odd and unintelligible writing instead of the king's name.

From an entirely different aspect also there is further evidence for the considerable length of the coining period of the star type.

While the first series—the anchor-wheel coin—was in the denomination of a quadrans, the second type or the star coin stood for one half that value. The smallest copper coins were always in great demand and had to be struck along with the higher-value coins in every issue. They can be found in each of the complete issues of Antigonus, of Herod, and of Archelaus, where they appear in fairly large quantities. (Even Antiochus' bronze of Jerusalem had a lepton to go with it, as illustrated in Figure 6.)

Before Antigonus and after Archelaus—40 B.C.—A.D. 6—there is no evidence that leptons existed in quantities adequate for normal money circulation. Furthermore, there were only few leptons with a Hebrew inscription, which are very rare and could not possibly have satisfied the demand of the people for small change.

Up until now star leptons have been found in very large, even enormous quantities. This fact allows us to believe that the star coin took the place of the lepton during those periods in which no others were minted. If the star lepton had been an issue of Alexander Jannaeus' reign exclusively, it would contradict the reasonable assumption that this prolific coin was popular currency throughout the entire reign of the Hasmonean dynasty. It seems strange, then, for anyone to imply that demand for this coin suddenly arose

during Alexander Jannaeus' reign or that he had a monopoly in coining it. Obviously, the very common star lepton had been struck even before Alexander Jannaeus' time and this explains the scarcity or absence of other leptons in these periods. Lack of small copper minting was not an oversight on the part of authorities, but was considered superfluous because of the abundance of star leptons in circulation.

As the series developed, there was a partial and incomplete repetition of inscriptions and symbols. Because of the poor workmanship and peculiar legend on the star leptons, numismatist G. F. Hill called them "wretched" and "imitation." He is justified in calling them works of imitation not because of their mediocre workmanship but because of their periodic revival and repetition of designs. As far as the characterization "wretched" is concerned, the poor quality of the star leptons may be attributed to the fact that they were not struck in the mint of the government but in some semi-official workshop.

## THE FLOWER TYPE

The last lepton type, a coin having a flower on the reverse, shows the same legends as the first type, namely the anchor-sun-wheel coin. This flower coin is a synthesis of three types: the anchor-wheel coin (see Plate VI); the anchor-star coin (see Plate VII); and the bronze coin of Antiochus, with a flower on the obverse (see Figure 6). The flower type, there-



FIGURE 8

Anchor/flower coin with the name of King Alexander.

fore, must be considered the youngest of the three Alexander series.

The flower coin shows only a single anchor design, whereas the star coins displayed four anchor forms: without crossbar, with one crossbar, and with two crossbars—one above and one in the middle, and a tridentlike form. This fact will cause no surprise if it is understood. Never do the star coins show an anchor with the double crossbar in the middle. This, however, happens to be the only form in the flower type which always has a double crossbar in the middle. This surprising fact can be better understood if we interpret the flower type as the successor to the star coin. Furthermore, there is no piece among the flower coins without the legend "King Jehonathan."

Compared to the anchor-wheel type, the flower coin is an excellent example of advanced craftsmanship. By this time, the coiner knew how to conceive a well-balanced model that included the legend "King Jehonathan." It may be assumed that when the flower coin appeared, the coinage of the latest sun-wheel variety with two crossbars and the unsatisfactory arrangement of the Hebrew legend had been discontinued. In its stead was issued the sun-wheel coin without that legend.

There is a dramatic finale to the issue of the Alexander series. When its minting ended, the event was signalized by a special over stamped issue. Many pieces of the flower type were overstruck with the stamp "High Priest Jonathan," informing the public that the Alexander mint had ceased.\* However, this turned out to be a temporary measure only. Our lepton mint reopened about the turn of the century, about the beginning of the first century of the Christian era,

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\* See Plate VIII.

as will be shown in the next chapter, a revival which took place under Roman auspices.

Now we can form an idea of how everything started and how it ended. Since the shape of the anchor on the quadrantes and the leptons developed identically, we have here two coin series which run parallel to each other. Yet, the lepton series must have had the earlier beginning because of its trident-shaped anchor. During the course of the issue, a royal Hebrew inscription was introduced but it was soon abandoned.

After having been in operation for about two hundred years, the mint was closed with the over stamped issue just mentioned. This must have happened in the time of King Antigonus Mattathias and the Herods—all of whom made newly designed leptons with their name inscriptions.

### *The Widow's Mite*

THE origin of the phrase "widow's mite" goes back to Mark, who reconstructed the following incident in Jesus' life during the period of Pontius Pilate, the infamous Roman procurator of Judea. It appears that at one time, as Jesus watched people put money contributions into the Temple treasury, the rich threw in many coins. Then along came a poor widow and she put in two "mites" as her humble offering. This so impressed Jesus that he called his disciples and exclaimed, "Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow has cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury. For all, they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all she had, even all her living."

The *mite* is the *lepton* because the word "mite" means the smallest, or lowest, coin denomination, and the lepton



was exactly that. Proverbially, the smallest Jewish coin, the lepton, was tarified or valued at half the Roman quadrans. As the lowest of the copper coins mentioned in the New Testament, the lepton appears in Luke and Mark. In Mark 12:42 the relationship between the lepton and quadrans matches the notation that "two lepta . . . make a quadrans." \*

Since customarily only quadrantes are listed for the period of the Roman procurators, numismatists have been troubled as to which Jewish coin specifically may be identified as the "widow's mite." Writers like E. Rogers and A. R. S. Kennedy suggested that one of the Alexander leptons of the anchor-star type best fills the requirements, without, however, being able to account for its existence during Pilate's time. The missing explanation was supplied partly by G. F. Hill in the section "Palestine" in the superb British Museum Catalogue. Hill listed the star leptons as *imitations* of the sun-wheel quadrantes. From our end we can accept the concept of *imitations* only with the following modification: whenever a star lepton from Jesus' time is an *imitation*, it is an imitation of those leptons minted far back and not an imitation of the sun-wheel quadrantes.

This, then, means that in the period of the Roman procurators no procuratorial leptons were minted; instead, imitations of the Alexander lepton with anchor and star were minted. Instead of designing a new type, the minting of an old, perpetual coin type was resumed. Historically and numismatically such a practice was not unusual.

We even have coin specimens which indicate clearly what happened (see Plate VII):

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\* The approximate weight of the *quadrans* is 40 grains, or three grams, while the *lepton* is about half this weight.

TABLE III

<i>Obverse</i>	<i>Reverse</i>
(g) Plain straight anchor with one crossbar (on some coins there are single Greek letters)	Six rays (on some specimens there are crude letters on one side of the coin)
(g) Plain straight anchor with one crossbar (on some coins there are single Greek letters); note initial of Herod's name in Greek	Star with six rays within a circle of dots (sometimes crude letters on one side); note "LIA" —the last three letters of Julia's name in Greek

All this information is striking corroboration of the theory we elaborated in the previous section on the Jewish Alexander coins. At this point another important question suggests itself: If the Jews at the time of the procurators imitated coin designs, why should they have chosen an Alexander Jannaeus type? We see no reason for it. Again, the conclusion is inescapable that the King Alexander series has no relation to Alexander Jannaeus and should be traced back to Alexander the Great.

Earlier in the book we presented an Etruscan coin whose design we assumed may have served as a model for the Jewish coins. As a matter of fact, there are many Etruscan coins that use the anchor and sun-wheel designs. Both symbols were in vogue with the people of the peninsula. We must admit that the existence of coin designs so similar to our Alexander series in geographic areas as far apart as Jerusalem and Rome at so early a time taxes the imagination. The First Book of the Maccabees tells us about Jewish-Roman relations, but this was much later or about the middle of the second century B.C., fifty years or more before the reign of Alexander Jannaeus. The original coins from Italy, however, we must estimate to be at least one hundred years older.

The migration of symbols that is documented on the Etruscan and Jewish coins shows a knowledgeable relationship between the Jews and Romans at a very early time. History has a way of repeating itself—*with* variations. Under the Roman procurators the question of leptons came up, and it seemed to prove quite agreeable to them that a design originating from their own country was chosen. These imitation leptons, with their ancient designs, and the quadrantes with the imperial inscriptions were certainly a worthy pair in Roman eyes. For the Jews it meant a linking-up symbolically with some of their earliest cultural traditions. Historically, it seemed a playful repetition and a return to origins.

### *Conclusions*

OBJECTIONS may be raised to our contention that a mint existed in Jerusalem before the Maccabean era. True, almost all literature on Jewish coinage refers to the history of the mint as beginning with the Hasmonean dynasty. As proof, many numismatists rely on the famous letter of Antiochus, quoted at the end of our first chapter, and they interpret it as the first authorization to strike coins in Jerusalem.

One scholar, Edward Rogers, interprets Antiochus' edict as a letter of authorization that refers to the minting of silver because the coinage of bronze was a natural right of organized municipalities. Bronze and copper coinage seems to have been a matter of convenience on a community level, while silver coinage went hand in hand with regional autonomy. Even so, no copper quadrantes and leptons, if ever issued by Simon, are known to us.

The logical explanation for the absence of such coins is that the Jews were already provided with small currency by

an independently well-established mint which issued the Alexander coins and that consequently there was no need for Simon to strike his own small copper.

The history of the entire series of Alexander coins has a fairly consistent pattern. In all likelihood the earliest coin was the star coin showing the trident variety; it was probably minted prior to the early sun-wheel type. When the sun-wheel coins were designed, the star coin was made to conform with it and in the main developed in a parallel fashion, as far as the pattern of the anchor and the reverse is concerned.

The flower coin was the latest in the historical development. It continued in circulation until discontinued by Antigonus and Herod. Afterwards a revival of the lepton took place, but this time as an imitation of the earlier type. These last coins continued to be struck as long as there were Jewish mints.

Since a coin with an Alexander pattern was chosen to be imitated, it may be taken for granted that this design was of an old and respectable type, well liked and esteemed by the people. A present-day parallel may be found in the Maria Theresia Thaler of 1780, which is still being minted for circulation in Africa and Asia. *However, a pattern of King Alexander Jannaeus never would have been chosen as an object of imitation because he, unlike some of his predecessors, was a king without especial fame or reputation and because the memory of his reign was in no way popular with later generations.*

The semi-official mints which produced the crude leptons were presumably also responsible for the traditional and neutral patterns represented on the Alexander coins. This

does not exclude the possibility that the authorities struck types of their own.

It seems definite that the Jewish Alexander coins, quadrantes as well as leptons, were perpetual and traditional minting models. Moreover, the great number of varieties, among which one anchor even appears in the shape of a trident, indicates a long duration of the minting period.

If this is granted and it is kept in mind that all these types were issued long before and long after Alexander Jannaeus, a final conclusion may be drawn that the name "Alexander" does not refer to the Jewish King Alexander Jannaeus. The name of "Jehonathan the King" on the reverse must be understood as symbolic and a token of the high sense of tradition characteristic of the age. The Maccabean and Hasmonean periods saw religious exaltation and fervor rise to a high pitch. We also know well that Christianity had its roots there. The coins further symbolized the sovereignty of the people and reflected the creative genius of the Judeans. The high-priest series documents an age when rulers did not prescribe and limit men's thoughts and actions. Altogether, it was a history-conscious epoch.

Everything considered, the coins we have been discussing here apparently originated and drew their inspiration from Alexander the Great.

B. V. Head in his notable *Historia Numorum* helps to substantiate this idea when he comments: "In the course of a single decade a new world had been opened up. A great wave of Hellenistic influence had swept over the ancient kingdoms of the East. . . . Petty local interests, local cults, local trade were now merged in larger circles of activity; commerce was now carried on over a wider field and on a grander scale, and Alexander, the one man by whose im-



petuous energy and insatiable ambition this mighty change has been brought about over the whole face of the ancient world, came to be regarded as a demi-god. The altered political aspect of the world, and the inward change in men's minds, were at once reflected as in a mirror on the current coins."

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Herod and His Successors

THE VARIOUS coin types and their inscriptions are products of the social temperament of the times in which they originated. On them is mirrored the fratricidal strife for the throne of Judea. For more than one hundred years the Hasmonean descendants of the Maccabees were the leaders of the Jews. When ambitious Herod the Idumean appeared on the scene, he challenged this leadership. Although driven from Judea by Antigonus, Herod recouped his fortune in Rome, where he played the political game so well that the Romans not only made him king of Judea but also gave him enough military support to unseat Antigonus, the last of the Hasmonean rulers.

In 37 B.C. Herod had marshalled his forces around the walls of Jerusalem but he hesitated to press victory to the point of destroying the city and its populace. From past experience Herod knew how rebellious the people could be and what the problems were in governing a people subdued by force. For these reasons he used all his powers of persuasion to obtain the goodwill of his enemies. However, he was up against the people's hatred for the Idumeans and their traditional loyalty to the dynasty of the Hasmoneans. This is strikingly described in one of Josephus' accounts.

Herod gave orders that his men should first make a proclamation before the wall that he had come for the good of the citizens and the welfare of the city, bearing no grudge even against those who were openly his foes, but on the contrary, being ready to forget the offenses which his most de-



FIGURE 9  
 Coins of King Herod and his son Archelaus.

terminated adversaries had committed against him. But Antigonus in answer to Herod's proclamation told Silo and the Roman army that it would be contrary to their own notion of right if they gave the kingship to Herod, who was a commoner and an Idumean, that is a half-Jew, when they ought to offer it to those who were of the royal family, as was their custom. And, he argued, if they were now ill-disposed toward him and were determined to deprive him of the kingship on the ground that he had received it from the Parthians, there were at least many of his family who might lawfully receive the kingship, for they had committed no offense against the Romans, and were priests; and thus they would be unworthily treated if they were deprived of this rank. . . .

Supported by the Romans, Herod could only be victorious and he became the uncontested ruler and king of the Jews; but because of his family background, he could not assume the position of high priest. With maniacal fury he eliminated possible opposition by murdering all members and descendants of the Hasmonean house. Driven by a boundless ego and a suspicion-ridden mind, his reign proved to be a deluge of blood. Remembering the Sanhedrin, whose death sentence he had escaped by taking to his heels, Herod got his full revenge by executing a majority of its members after he assumed power.

Rarely in history had a people been so completely deprived of its hereditary royal family as were the Jews of that period. But there was little they could do to shake off Herod's iron rule.

Herod's position in the Roman orbit was that of one of the *reges socii*, or semi-independent kings, who ruled with the consent of Rome. It was expected of him that he keep strict order in his domain. And Herod, fearing Rome as much as his own subjects, exercised his powers in a brutal fashion.

Apparently, Rome did not care to what lengths Herod went in order to keep the Judeans in line. The Romans throughout their empire employed political strategy and military persuasion as part of their *Machtpolitik*. All those subject to Roman rule had to endure the same yoke. In the case of Judea, the Romans made concessions at times in order not to arouse the people. Such periods of "neutralized tensions" and compromise made possible the existence of the "Freedom" coins, which come a bit later in our story.

In addition to military power, Herod was given an apparently limited right to coin money, some of which showed a strong Greek influence. His reconstruction of the Temple has been variously interpreted as a gratification of his vanity through a variety of artistic projects, or as a means of appeasing his subjects by giving them something which traditionally lay close to their hearts.

As a matter of fact, the first half of his long, thirty-seven-year reign was full of paradoxes. On the one hand, he decimated the Sanhedrin, observed many social customs of the "heathens" and general administrative severity; on the other hand, he rebuilt the Temple and respected its sanctity, excused some prominent religious figures from an oath of allegiance, honored the mystical sect of the Essenes and aided Jews outside of Judea through his connections in Rome.

Herod's restless energy prompted many domestic projects, including the improvement of Jerusalem's water supply, extensive public buildings, and fortifications. At one point he organized a public-works project that employed some fifty thousand people at a time when the country was struck by famine. As a diplomat, he ingratiated himself with a succession of Roman emperors who recognized his capabilities and added to Herod's territories the cities of Gadara, Hippos, Samaria, Gaza, Anthedon and Joppa.



Though he managed to keep control of external affairs, his personal life that saw marriage to a string of ten women was a source of constant turmoil. At that time polygamy was allowed. The historian Josephus copied his accounts from the record kept by Herod's private teacher and historian Nicholas of Damascus. From these accounts we find that 28 B.C. proved to be a turning point in Herod's life. Inflamed by charges of infidelity against his beautiful wife Mariamne, granddaughter of Hyrcan, the jealous Herod ordered her execution. Almost immediately his rashness turned into regret. Legend has it that Herod's remorse took such proportions that he had Mariamne's body preserved in honey in order to keep her near him.

From then on he lapsed into periods of insanity that ultimately led to a breakdown in relations with everyone around him. The vast monies he continued to expend on construction works came from heavy taxation that led people to complain to Rome that they were being brought to a state of complete poverty. In fact, his economic policies especially hurt the farmers, who began wholesale migrations to the cities to try their hands at trading and the crafts. Instability also marked the political scene and encouraged the activities of the Zealot party. They were distinct from the Essenes, whose mystical and humanistic preachings are paralleled later in Jesus' teachings. Historically, the Zealots were closer to the Pharisees, but differed from them in that they advocated revolution to speed the coming of the Kingdom of God. With support mainly from the Galileans, they indulged in outbursts against Herod.

When it became evident that Herod was slipping, intrigues among his palace family began to mount. Around the throne hovered his sons Antipater, Aristobulus, Alexander, Archelaus, Herod of Rome, Herod Antipas and Herod Philip.

As the squabbles increased, Herod appealed to Rome, which granted him the unprecedented favor as a subject-king to determine for himself the line of succession to his throne. Before he died, Herod had a number of his sons executed for treason and treachery and divided his territory in the following fashion: Archelaus received Judea, Samaria and the title of king; Herod Antipas was to rule Galilee and Perea as a tetrarch; and Herod Philip was given the north-eastern provinces, with the title of tetrarch.

But even on his deathbed, suffering from intestinal cancer, Herod was obsessed with revenge and the desire for mourners and public lamentation at his impending funeral so that he ordered the execution of a group of Jewish nobles imprisoned at the Hippodrome in Jericho. For the sake of differentiating Herod from his later namesakes, he has been called "Herod the Great." In the light of the tyrannical reign of Herod that came to an end in the year 4 B.C., and his economy-wrecking accomplishments, the designation "great" is only of chronological convenience. The seventy-year-old ruler left behind him a bitter people, a split kingdom, and—of especial interest to us—a sizable coinage.

Various insurrections that flared up in the wake of Herod's death were viciously quelled by Roman legions. To impress Herod's son Archelaus with his subordinate status, Rome stripped him of the kingly title, but allowed him an *ethnarch* rank. As a further sign of Roman domination, the country was ruled by a Roman procurator, taxes were collected by contractors, and armed garrisons were stationed throughout the country as in the other Roman provinces.

Archelaus was a carbon copy of his father, delighting in public projects; but he did not have Herod's tenacity or luck and was banished to Gaul by Emperor Augustus A.D. 6, after ten years of high-handed rule.

The other sons of Herod enjoyed a greater longevity. Antipas earned the description of "sly fox" and he did his best to placate the people by adopting some of Herod's better policies. At the Sea of Galilee he built the splendid city of Tiberias, whose name is inscribed on some of his coins. Like his father, he had a strong sensual streak that was to cause him trouble. Antipas was married to the daughter of a strong Arabian king, Aretas, but decided to divorce her after falling under the spell of the ambitious daughter of the beheaded Aristobulus, Herodias. The years which followed were full of political trouble. One of the popular and attention-commanding Essene preachers, Johanan, or John the Baptist, stirred people with his denunciation of corruption in high places. Fearful of a rebellion, Antipas had the preacher put to death. This gave rise to the now famous story of Salome, daughter of Antipas and Herodias, who was inspired by her mother to ask for the head of the preacher when Antipas promised to grant her any wish after viewing her exotic dancing. Later she married Antipas' brother Philip, who came to an inglorious end A.D. 34.

Samaria and Galilee were hotbeds of discontent and gave birth to many popular religious revivalists, among them the Galilean Joshua, or Jesus, who claimed descent from the House of David. At a time when religio-social teachings were prone to inflame people against political institutions, reformers like Jesus made the ruling classes and the entrenched Roman administration extremely jittery. To remove potential political upheaval, Jesus was quickly tried before the Roman procurator Pontius Pilate and, like his contemporary John the Essene, who had baptized him, was put to death.

Neither Antipas nor Pontius Pilate could cope with the widespread discontent so that Rome was forced to step in and remove its procurator A.D. 36 and Antipas a year later.

Antipas' hasty divorce of the Arabian king Aretas' daughter also came back to haunt him. Aretas remembered the insult and seized on a border dispute at Galaaditis to annihilate Antipas' army.

One of Antipas' accusers who appealed to Rome was Agrippa, the son of Aristobulus and Berenice and the grandson of Herod and Mariamne. Since he was a tippling companion of Gaius Caligula, it came as no great surprise that he was appointed king of the Jews when Caligula became emperor of Rome A.D. 38. The significance of this appointment lay in the pale token of independence given to the Jews by Rome. The Egyptians, for example, who did not have a native king, resented Rome's gesture that was primarily motivated by personal friendship of the emperor for Agrippa, and they started riots in Alexandria. Since they had learned better than to storm the Jewish quarter—Egyptian rioters had previously absorbed some sorry lessons at the hands of the defenders—they pillaged the Jewish homes outside that quarter, and they seized on the diabolic idea of complaining to Caligula that the Jews, unlike the Egyptians, did not put statues of the emperor in places of worship. Because mad Caligula actually believed himself to be a divinity, with celestial pretensions he ordered his statue to be put up in Jerusalem.

Caligula's administrators of the Roman provinces were much better acquainted with the religious temper of the Jews, who would rather die than permit sacrilege to their places of worship. As a matter of fact, the Jews had just destroyed an altar put up for Caligula by the heathen citizens of Jamnia. Petronius, who was entrusted with Caligula's divine commission to erect the emperor's statue in Jerusalem, knew that this would incite the Jews to armed revolt and he appealed to Caligula to reconsider. There is no telling



what would have happened if Agrippa had not been on one of his frequent jousts in Rome. Like other Herodian princes, he was educated in Rome and established personal contact and friendship with important figures. Since Agrippa was dining with Caligula when Petronius' message arrived, he was able to dissuade the emperor from his intentions. To save face, Caligula ordered Petronius to commit suicide for failing to carry out the original order with speed. Fortunately, too, Caligula was assassinated and Petronius was spared the pleasure of accompanying his master to empyreal or other domains.

Agrippa I, despite his youthful escapades, turned out to be a ruler with a considerable sense of responsibility. Through his influence on Emperor Claudius, Caligula's successor, he was able to help Jews throughout the Roman provinces. Furthermore, he respected the religious conventions of his subjects and even took a leading part in ceremonies. He also stayed with tradition by keeping coins minted for Judea neutral. On these coins there were no portraits or other designs that would offend religious sensitivities. However, on coins struck for other territories assigned to him by friendly Rome there are portraits in his own likeness.

In his support of the Pharisaic nationalist policies and his beginning work on an impregnable wall around Jerusalem, some historians see an attempt at gradual emancipation from Rome. But whatever his ambitions they were cancelled by his death A.D. 44. One of the questions that probably will never be answered is whether Agrippa's religious display in Jerusalem was hypocritical, in view of the barbaric Roman sport festivals he sponsored elsewhere. Regardless of the answer, the non-Jews under his rule greeted his death with undisguised joy, while the Jews mourned him as a staunch and sincere friend.



Between the Jewish people and the procurators who administered the country as representatives of Roman authority there was an unbridgeable chasm of misunderstanding. They were alien to one another in custom, religion, and outlook on life and regarded each other with hostility. As a result there was continual friction, which finally exploded into two major conflicts that later brought catastrophe to the Jewish nation. In A.D. 44, Cuspius Flavius as Roman procurator, following in the footsteps of some of his predecessors, provoked the people by demanding that the symbolic garments of the high priest be put in Roman keeping. Also, among other senseless acts, he mercilessly killed a popular rebel chief and his followers. Some eight years afterwards, new trouble broke out when a Roman soldier in the Temple court of Jerusalem insulted the Jews during their Passover celebration. In answer to complaints, procurator Cumanus sent out his legions, and in the ensuing conflict, according to Josephus' estimate, twenty thousand people lost their lives. Instead of relying on the procurator for justice when further indignities occurred, a group of Zealots took matters into their own hands, only to be crucified by the Romans.

Under the procurator Felix, who replaced Cumanus A.D. 52, rebellion became an everyday occurrence, and Felix instituted such an implacable reign of terror that more and more Jews began to associate themselves with the political fanaticism of the Sicarii. This patriotic party received its name from the *sicae*, or short daggers, they employed to get rid of their enemies. To restore order, Rome kept sending new procurators, the worst of whom was Gessius Florus. He had obtained the office through political bribery and from A.D. 64 to 66 he viewed the country as his private plundering ground, ruining whole cities in the process. This state of affairs could not long continue without serious repercussions.

Agrippa II, the only son of Agrippa I, was seventeen years old when his father died. The Emperor Claudius wanted to give him his father's titles and lands but had to overcome the opposition of Roman advisers. Traditional friendship for the Herodians won out, and during Agrippa II's career, from A.D. 44 to 100, he was entrusted by Claudius and Nero with the kingdom of Chalcis and portions of Perea and Galilee. In addition, he was given the right to oversee the Temple and to appoint high priests. Because of his residence in Rome and closeness to the emperor, he was able to intercede for his Jewish countrymen on a number of occasions, but on the whole he tried to steer clear of responsibility. As a matter of conceit, he struck coins bearing his own portrait, but under pressure from Rome the emperor's portrait diplomatically began to appear on Agrippa II's coins.

Weak and ineffectual, Agrippa let his life be dominated by his widowed sister Berenice, who came to live with him and had two children in his house. These scandalous doings were supplemented by her intimate relations with the Emperor Titus, who was prevented from marrying Berenice because of popular disapproval. Possibly as compensation, Titus gave Agrippa II many honors beyond his merit. Agrippa's contribution to Jerusalem as custodian of the Temple consisted of some refurbishing, but the priests, for the most part, were happy to have him stay away. In fact, they built a special wall to keep Agrippa from indolently watching Temple ceremonies from the vantage point of his palace. Although he and Berenice hurried from Rome to Jerusalem A.D. 66 to, unsuccessfully, head off a major clash that loomed ominously, the crowning touch of his vapid career was his consistent support of the Romans during the war against the Jews, who were determined to bring an end to oppression.

To the Romans, Palestine was a militarily important land-bridge, and they were determined to keep iron-fisted control over its people at all costs. What they failed to realize was the fact that every act of suppression would be met with fanatical resistance and that every violation of religious customs would be met with furious protest. In all of Rome's experience there had never been such an example of continuous defiance of the empire by a nation for the sake of religious principles.

It was just a question of time before the entire situation would explode into open warfare. The spark finally was set off by the rapacious Roman procurator Florus, who seized a considerable portion of the Temple's treasury, most likely for his own private needs. This stung a number of angry people to action. They dressed up in beggars' clothes and went through the market places piteously crying for alms for the "destitute" Florus, holding out baskets that jingled with coins. Their savage ridicule was not lost on Florus, who retaliated by killing more than six hundred people.

With the example of numerous such massacres behind them, the Jews, following the inflammatory call to action by revolutionaries, decided that they had taken more than enough. In A.D. 66 a rebel band gave the signal for a general uprising by capturing the now famous fortress of Masada. Romans were put to the sword—a monopoly which they had exercised themselves for so long—and Jerusalem was defended against strong Roman troops for six long months. After that, the scale was tipped and the defenders routed these troops and cleared Palestine of the Romans. The Jews used the lull in the fighting to strengthen their fortresses and to ready themselves for the inevitable counterblow by the Romans. This did not take long in coming, as Nero put one

of his ablest military commanders, Vespasian, into the field.

Vespasian, backed by all the resources of Rome, set out to reduce Palestine systematically and to end the fierce "holy war." First he put down resistance in Galilee and Trans-Jordania and then moved on to Jerusalem. At this point, Nero's death plunged Rome into civil war and his generals maneuvered for the throne. Vespasian proved to be the strongest and was proclaimed emperor. But he remembered the unfinished business at Jerusalem and sent his son Titus to complete what he had started.

A vast number of people belonging to all walks of life were crowded into the small area of Jerusalem, ready to defend it to the last man. Even at that critical point, when the Jews had one goal in common, they wasted their energies in factional dissension, creating a danger that was as disastrous as the foe outside the walls. Titus smashed hundred-pound stones into the city by means of his war machine, the slingshot-like *ballista*, while battering rams tore huge gaps into the walls. The defenders repaired these gaps at night, but the incessant pounding had its effect and the Roman soldiers poured into the city to overcome the last bare-handed resistance of the Jews. Nothing was spared in the frenzied slaughter which climaxed the months'-long siege. Ironically, the city fell almost on the anniversary date of Nebuchadnezzar's earlier destruction of the Temple.

After the Temple was put to the torch, captives were sent to the Roman mines and gladiatorial arenas. Titus' triumphal procession in Rome saw a display of many Temple objects which were later sculptured on his commemorative arch. To symbolize his victory after the four-year struggle, Titus followed custom by having the brave leader Simon ben Giora hurled from a rock in sacrifice to the Roman gods. Also he pictorialized his victory by striking coins which showed a



disconsolate woman representing the defeated nation, sitting under a palm tree and on the other side of it a captive Jew. The inscription on the coin reads: *Judaea Capta*.



FIGURE 10

Roman victory coin "*Judaea Capta*" with the image of the Emperor Vespasian.

For close to a century there followed a troubled peace punctuated by sporadic disturbances by die-hards and rebels who continually probed for weaknesses in the Roman armor. An opportunity came when the Emperor Trajan in a series of Roman expeditions dangerously overextended himself in the east. Riots in a newly occupied town had a chain reaction and soon engaged Roman attention in Mesopotamia, Armenia, and other regions. About A.D. 115, when Rome was preoccupied with the strong attacks of Parthian forces, Jewish revolts broke out in Cyrene, Egypt, Cyprus and Judea that required a diversion of Roman troops. After Trajan's death, Rome salvaged as much as she could through a face-saving peace that reduced her eastern holdings considerably.

Jewish casualties had been heavy in these ventures against Trajan, and Judea would have been content to settle down peaceably under Roman rule as it had generally existed some twenty years earlier under the emperors Domitian and Nerva. In Nerva's time there had been some dispute about paying



imperial taxes and a compromise had been reached. Nerva was eager to show tolerance and struck coins that bore his image on one side and on the other an inscription with the pacifying words *Fisci Judaici calumnia sublata*, or, "The insults of the Jew's tax have been removed."

Judea had experienced a revival of economic prosperity and religious learning so that indeed it had to be a serious provocation before they would take up arms again. This provocation was supplied by the Emperor Hadrian, the successor of Trajan, who, like so many other ruling Romans, terribly misjudged the national and religious sensibilities of the Jews. Hadrian conceived of a project which called for rebuilding the ruins and barren haunts of Jerusalem as a seat of Roman culture. He was going to rename Jerusalem as Aelia and dedicate its new temple to Jupiter Capitolinus, the patron god of Rome. Further, he issued edicts forbidding Sabbath observances and the rites of circumcision.

These edicts roused the people to fury, and under the brilliant leadership of Simon Bar Kochba and with the blessings of the venerated Rabbi Akiba, the entire country rose up in arms. In the first flush of the rebellion they routed the Romans, held festive celebrations and rejoiced in what appeared to be a return of Maccabean glory. But soon the 200,000 fighters who had rallied around Bar Kochba had to face the full might of Rome, as its most celebrated general, Julius Severus, took to the field. He followed the military tactics laid down by other Roman generals who warred against the Jews. It took three and a half years of concentrated Roman military skill, from A.D. 132 to 135, to subdue the country, practically village by village. It was on the western shore of the Dead Sea at the rock fortress of Masada that the war came to an end as it also had in the previous century during the First Revolt. With the breaching of these walls, the Jewish state was irrep-

arably gutted and its human casualties numbered at least half a million.

The war had also taken its toll of Roman soldiers and General Severus did not append the customary postscript "I and my army are well" to his report to the Roman Senate. Instead, they revenged themselves on the remaining Jewish population and left no stone unturned to root out Jewish life. "All Judea was well-nigh a desert," a thousand villages were destroyed, and fifty fortresses lay in ruin. In line with Hadrian's intentions, the capital city Jerusalem was made into a purely Roman colony. Under the penalty of death, no Jew was permitted to enter the city, while Roman coins tell us that the city's official name was *Colonia Aelia Capitolina*. In addition to the deity Jupiter, the coins also show Bacchus, Serapis and Astarte as patron gods of the renamed city.

Though the Jewish homeland was destroyed and was not restored until some eighteen hundred years later in our own day, the Jewish spirit was not broken. The Romans had fully expected that the Jews would be engulfed in their pagan surroundings and bordering cultures. In this they were wrong. The sinews of religion held the Jews together as Galilee became a cultural island amid a hostile world.

No longer was there Jewish minting and coinage; instead, skilled artists put their creative energies to bear on synagogue architecture and design, stone carvings, and magnificently wrought frescoes and synagogue mosaics. Though there is evidence of artistic creations on glass, stone and marble, craftsmanship in the following centuries was lavished on the dispersed synagogues. We need not search far for an explanation: in the absence of a national home the Jewish people turned to their synagogues for strength, communal life and continuance of traditions that lay deeply rooted in most ancient history.

## CHAPTER SIX

### The Controversial "Freedom" Coins

NOW THAT we have described the dominant personalities, people, places and other historical settings, we are ready to take a close look at some of the most controversial of ancient coins inscribed "freedom," "deliverance," "redemption" of Israel, Jerusalem and Zion.

Many of the traditional approaches to the dating of these splendid coins are based on illogical deductions. We are asked to believe, for instance, that the Jewish nation brought its coin output to the highest artistic level during a period when it was in insurrection against Roman oppression and when it was on a complete war-footing.

A. Reifenberg sums up this incongruous approach by flatly saying that "the sovereign Jewish coinage reached its highest standard of workmanship at the very time when the last serious rising [A.D. 132-135] was brutally crushed." \*

To put it mildly, this view presents us with an upside-down situation. It implies that the nation in times of peace, when rulers spent money freely, restricted itself to poor coinage, but that in a period of war and upheaval it indulged in lavish coinage. Surely, it is reasonable to assume that a nation at war and occupied with last-ditch defenses has more important things to worry about than the perfection and excellence of numerous coin designs. It is all the more likely that the finely designed coins originated in times of peace.

The whole structure of modern dating of ancient Jewish

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\* *Israel's History in Coins*, p. 17.



FIGURE 11a



FIGURE 11b

Some of the numerous silver and bronze coins supposedly issued by Simon Bar Kochba.



coins is riddled with the kind of illogical premises to which we have just pointed. It would be easy to go down the line and list the others; instead, we are going to build a case for a new dating of the "freedom" coins from the ground up and ask some questions that must be answered by numismatists if we are to face up to the situation honestly.

In present handbooks and catalogues, the post-Hasmonean coins minted in Jerusalem are grouped as follows:

First group	37 B.C. till A.D. 6 (Herod and his son Archelaus)
Second group	A.D. 6 till 66 (Roman procurators; Agrippa I)
Third group	A.D. 66 till 70 (First Revolt)
Fourth group	A.D. 132 till 135 (Second Revolt)

This traditional grouping is convenient but not historically sound. Those who are responsible for the coin groupings based their speculation on the following: Groups one and two have the names of rulers inscribed exclusively in Greek, while groups three and four, in contrast, feature inscriptions exclusively in Hebrew and display a variety of "freedom" sentiments. A further justification for the grouping is found in the fact that the fourth group contains a large amount of individual coins which to all outside appearances were overstruck on Roman coins originating from the times between the emperors Nero and Hadrian. On the basis of the overstruck coins alone they jumped to the conclusion that the entire issue of the fourth group was produced by the insurgents of Bar Kochba during the Second Revolt.

This superficial grouping of coins leads to many unacceptable assumptions. We note the time lag between groups three and four and are asked to believe that for sixty-two years coin-making was idle, but that in the following three and a half years, at the time of the Bar Kochba rebellion, a prolific and substantial coinage made a sudden appearance.

Clearly, there is need to regroup these coins and put things into a new perspective. As we shall see, there is, in addition to overlooked clues, enough solid material that allows us to reconstruct the history of the "freedom" coins in much the same way as the "Alexander" series.

### *Herod's Coins*

TRADITIONAL numismatic classifications do not give Herod credit for issuing coins with Hebrew inscriptions. Yet it seems incredible that the king who tried to woo his predominantly hostile subjects—who saw him as a tool of *Roman* overlordship—would fail to resort to the obvious and simple expedient of making coins with historical *Jewish* motifs that were in constant favor.

The last time we spoke about coins inscribed in Hebrew, it concerned King Antigonus, 40–37 B.C. We have already seen that Antigonus on his coins added the Hebrew inscription "Mattathias," invoking the memory of the venerated Maccabean high priest and chieftain who, as the First Book of the Maccabees tells us, was regarded as a savior of the nation, a prophet-like personality, a defeater of foreign enemies and a hand of the Almighty. There was a twofold purpose for this inscription—namely Antigonus wanted to gain popularity for himself and, further, he was hitting hard against Herod, who wanted to unseat him.

Unlike Antigonus, Herod could boast of no priestly lineage and, in addition, was a converted Jew by ancestry. When Herod came to power, he faced a dilemma: to the Jews he was a Roman; to the Romans he was a Jew. Accordingly, in choosing Hebrew designations and inscriptions for his coins, he had to use something which was not offensive to the Romans and at the same time would find favor with the Jews.

As a solution, he hit on the "flat" silver tetradrachm with a representation of the Temple. This idea was in perfect harmony with his Temple-building plans. Moreover, this put him in line with the Maccabeans, who in earlier times had restored and renovated the Temple.\*

At this point we must disprove two ossified beliefs, namely that the Romans would not tolerate Jewish minting of silver or Hebrew inscriptions on the coins, and that Herod was prevented from using Hebrew inscriptions because of his origin.

We are repeatedly told that Judea never obtained the right from Rome to issue silver coins. This is pure conjecture, because no written records have come down to us that clearly and authoritatively state the rights of coinage of a community ruled by the Romans. All that we know about the Roman attitude toward coinage comes from the evidence on coins. From their inscriptions we can often reconstruct what coinage rights a community enjoyed under Roman rule. However, as with all rules there are exceptions.† It is well known that for a variety of reasons the Romans made concessions to Judea that were unheard of in other subject-regions. As far as the Romans are concerned, we think that Herod was perfectly safe in introducing the "flat" silver tetradrachm, along with the "freedom" inscriptions. In all probability, these coins and their inscriptions—which were saturated with his-

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\* Compare the tetradrachm showing the Temple representation with that of a bronze coin featuring Herod's name. See Plate IX.

† There are rare (gold and silver) denarii of Caesar Augustus, in a very prominent eastern style, whose minting place cannot be established with certainty. G. Mattingly suggests the possibility that these coins were issued by Herod I in Judea in honor of Augustus. (*The Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum*, vol. I, pp. cxxvi ff.)

torical reminiscences—appeared to the Romans as an integral part of Jewish life. This way of life seemed utterly strange to them anyway. In their indifference to Jewish customs, Roman officials could easily have missed the degree to which these coins helped stimulate the Jewish spirit. Beyond this, it should be remembered that Herod was placed on the throne with Rome's support and because of his recognized loyalty a good deal of tolerance was extended to his coinage.

Now for the Hebrew inscriptions on Herod's coins. Although Herod had strong attachments to Greek and Roman customs, there is no historical evidence that he launched an all-out drive to Hellenize his subjects or to deprive them of the old and venerable Hebrew script on coins. Nor can we take it for granted that Hebrew script was strictly reserved for the coins bearing the formula "High Priest and [*Chever*] Community of the Jews" and that therefore Herod, who was not allowed to officiate as high priest, was prevented from using the script.

As a compensation for the withheld priestly position, there was a special Temple ceremony (described later when we discuss Agrippa's coins) in which Herod took part, trying to reach the hearts of his subjects by observation of religious ceremonials. Then, too, he was married to a Hasmonean princess, a marriage which linked him to the royal house which, ironically, he helped to extinguish. Since Herod as king knew the value of relating himself to established traditions, we believe that, in addition to the coins that directly bear his name in Greek, *he revived Maccabean "freedom" themes and put them on coins.\**

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\* In identifying those coin types which may have been issued by Herod with Hebrew inscriptions, we have in mind first of all the "flat" tetradrachm with its picture of the Temple, the legend "Jerusalem, Second Year of Deliverance of Israel," and its symbol of the *lulab*.

With all this in mind, we put the dawn of the "freedom" coinage in Herod's era. As far as the end of this coinage is concerned, we know it to have occurred A.D. 135. This gives us an approximately 170-year time span within which we can properly expect the large amounts of coins and their variations to have come into existence, rather than the short three and a half years of Bar Kochba's uprising.

Since coin designs were timeless and were repeated again and again, it is of course impossible to establish the minting time for most of the individual coins or types. But there are exceptions, namely those specimens which were overstruck and have left-over underlying coin patterns. By uncovering the nature of the all-important coin overstriking, we hope to open new vistas to the numismatist.

In our effort to put the "freedom" coins against a historical background far different from the revolutionary period in which modern numismatists have set them, we look to the Agrippa coins for further clues.

### *Agrippa's Coins*

Two series of Jewish bronze coins bear the inscriptions "Freedom of Zion" and "Redemption of Zion." They contain five types, two of them with the former and three with the latter inscription:

	<i>Obverse</i>	<i>Reverse</i>
No. 1	Freedom of Zion	year 2
" 2	Freedom of Zion	year 3
" 3	year 4—half	} Redemption of Zion
" 4	year 4—quarter	
" 5	year 4	

In listing these coins in the catalogue of Greek coins in the British Museum, numismatist G. F. Hill follows the





FIGURE 12

The bronze coins of Zion 1. Dated year 2. 2. Dated year 3.  
3, 4, 5. Dated year 4.

standard notion that Nos. 1 and 2, "Freedom of Zion," were issued during the First Revolt against the Romans, from A.D. 66 to 70, and that the three types with the words "Re-

demption of Zion" belong to the earlier period of the Maccabees.

At the same time, Barclay V. Head, in *Historia Numorum*, groups the five types together to form one series issued during the First Revolt. For various reasons preference is now given to the opinion of Head, despite the absence of clear-cut numismatic or other evidence.

Though the five coins most likely belong together and constitute a single series, we disagree on the conjectured time of issue. Here we are confronted with one of the problems in Jewish numismatics for which no satisfactory solution has yet been offered. A new approach is called for, based on historical and psychological factors, supported by several coins, two of which have only recently been published by A. Kindler. These coins yield a much more acceptable and logical interpretation of the "Zion" coins.

The first reason for our different approach lies in the type of the design. The first two bronze coins of the series with the "Zion" inscription have pictorial representations almost identical with two bronze coins of equal denomination in the series issued during the time of the Roman procurators, namely those of the year 4 of the reign of Tiberius. On the

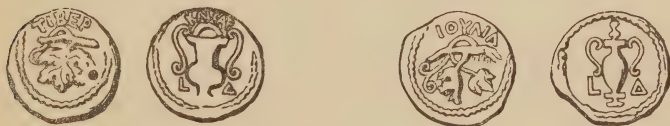


FIGURE 13

Two procuratorial bronze coins issued in Jerusalem under the Emperor Tiberius. Compare these with Figure 12, No. 1.

one side they display an *amphora*—a narrow-necked Graeco-Roman oil- or wine-storage vessel—and on the other, a vine leaf and tendril.

It is debated whether these coins (Figure 13), as well as all other procuratorial coins with names of the imperial family, were issued by the Romans or by the Jews. According to one theory, they were issued by the Romans, who gave these coins a neutral design, instead of the customary portrait, out of consideration for the Jewish religion, which forbade human representation. The other theory attributes these coins to the Jews themselves, who, in compliance with their religious laws, likewise chose some design other than the portrait of the emperor. The answer to this question is not decisive for our point of view. However, any coin issued under the Roman procurators, whether by the Romans or by the Jews, and bearing the name of a Roman emperor or of a member of the imperial family must be considered a Roman coin. How else could a people in revolt against the Romans view such coins? It is logical that they would not take over symbols from their oppressors. Indeed, it would seem odd that these "Zion" coins (Nos. 1 and 2), if issued during an uprising against the Romans, were given a form reminding the people so strongly of their much hated rulers.

Neither could this strange fact be explained by saying that the Jewish minters were unable to produce some suitable pattern of their own. The fine design execution proves that they were skilled craftsmen, well capable of making a good coin. But if it was said that the minters—though technically proficient—were not creative enough to design a new model, why then did they choose just this model of a Roman coin which brought back such unpleasant memories, when so many others could have served their purpose better? Special attention should be given to this psychological fact. It appears to us to be most important and it will furnish the starting point for our further search for the period of the issue of these

coins that is more compatible with their special type. If any such period were found, the problem could be solved on historical grounds alone, even without the supporting evidence of actual coins.

In searching through the history of the Jews for such a period, the following criteria should be applied: Relations with the Romans during that particular period must have been friendly; the Jews must have been allowed to shape their religious, cultural and economic conditions according to their own desire, showing a degree of independence so that they were not disturbed at being under Roman rule. Only in an era of friendly relations with the Romans, and not during a revolution, would it have been possible for the Jews to copy a Roman coin design. Hence, the question arises: At what time did the Jews enjoy enough freedom and independence *under the Romans* to justify the "redemption" and "freedom" inscriptions on the coins? Here the available literary sources are of help.

The writings of Flavius Josephus disclose one particular period in the history of the Jews during which they enjoyed a great degree of liberty and independence, despite the fact that they were politically under Roman rule. It was the time of the reign of Agrippa I, when the Jews were granted full autonomy in their domestic affairs. A detailed account of this period is found in Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews*. Since the descriptions of this ancient historian are lengthy and elaborate, we quote a few excerpts from *A History of the Jewish People* by E. Schuerer, whose presentation, while largely based on the early source, is much clearer and more concise.

There were again golden days for Pharisaism; a revival of the age of Alexandra. Hence Josephus and the Talmud are unanimous in sounding forth the praises of Agrippa. "He loved to live continually at Jerusalem, and was exactly care-

ful in the observance of the laws of his country. He therefore kept himself entirely pure; nor did any day pass over his head without its appointed sacrifice." Thus runs the eulogistic strain of Josephus, and the Talmud relates how he as a simple Israelite with his own hand presented the first-fruits in the temple. And not only at home, but also abroad, he represented the interests and claims of Judaism. When on one occasion in the Phoenician city of Dora, a mob of young people erected a statue of the emperor in the Jewish synagogue, he used his influence with the governor of Syria, P. Petronius, so that not only for the future was any such outrage strictly forbidden, but also the guilty parties were called to account for their proceedings. And when he betrothed his daughter Drusilla to Epiphanes, son of King Antiochus of Commagene, he made him promise that he would submit to be circumcised. By such displays of piety he gave abundant satisfaction to the people who were under the guidance of the Pharisees. This was shown in a very striking manner when, at the Feast of Tabernacles in A.D. 41, according to the old custom, he read the Book of Deuteronomy and in the passage, "Thou mayest not set a stranger over thee that is not thy brother" (Deut. xvii:15), he burst forth in tears, because he felt himself referred to in it. Then cried out the people to him, "Be not grieved, Agrippa! Thou art our brother! Thou art our brother!" . . . To a Pharisaic-national policy belonged also emancipation from a position of dependence upon Rome. . . . In order to strengthen the fortifications of Jerusalem, the capital, he began to build on the north of the city a powerful new wall, which, according to Josephus' account, would, if it had been completed, have made the city impregnable.

Another historian, A. H. M. Jones, describes this era in much the same way. In his book *The Herods of Judaea*, he has placed even more emphasis on the independent manner in which Agrippa handled his affairs.



Agrippa I displayed a dangerous tendency towards independence. He began to fortify the New City, the quarter to the North of the temple, in a manner which should have made Jerusalem impregnable. It is hard to believe that Agrippa was mad enough to be planning a revolt, and it may be that these fortifications were for show only, and were designed principally to give employment. But, taken with his nationalist policy in religion, these military works roused the suspicion of the legate of Syria, who reported them to Claudius. Claudius was obliged to send Agrippa a reprimand, ordering him to cease building.

Agrippa's policy towards his neighbours also was aggressive. He quarrelled with the two great city republics of Tyre and Sidon and, instead of submitting his cause to the judgment of the Roman government as he should have done, he threatened them with an economic blockade, which soon brought them to heel, for they depended for the feeding of their great industrial populations on the corn-lands of the interior which Agrippa ruled.

Another diplomatic move aroused graver suspicions. Agrippa held at Tiberias, without informing the Roman government, a conference of the more important client kings of the East. . . . Here again it is difficult to see what Agrippa's object was. It is hardly credible that the suspicions were correct, that he had reasonable designs based on the hope of Parthian support; Agrippa would have been more secretive in his methods if his objects had been so dangerous.

The significance of this information and its connection with the problems of the "Zion" coins can hardly be denied. Undoubtedly, the favorable conditions in Jerusalem during the reign of Agrippa I strengthened a feeling of independence and encouraged the Jews to speak of "Freedom of Zion." What other explanation could be given than that the Jews were thinking that an era of freedom had arrived, allowing

them to venture the construction of an impenetrable wall around Jerusalem?

If we assume the coins to have been issued at that time, it would explain the choice of the design as compatible with the popular feeling, which was definitely friendly toward Rome. If, on the other hand, a period of hostility or revolt had prevailed when these coins were issued, the choice of the designs would certainly appear incompatible with the feelings of the Jewish people.

Further evidence for the dating is furnished by the historical facts. Agrippa reigned A.D. 37-44. After the sudden death of Tiberius, the next emperor, Caligula, A.D. 37, made his personal friend Agrippa king of the tetrarchy of Trachonitis. Since the district of Trachonitis had a virtually non-Jewish population, Agrippa's appointment is further proof of Caligula's personal trust in him. Four years later, when Claudius came to the throne, he added to that district the tetrarchy of Galilee, which was inhabited almost exclusively by Jews, and, up to that date, was governed by Herod Antipas. In the following year, Claudius added all of Judea to the possessions of Agrippa. In effect, Agrippa dominated a realm—composed of Jews and non-Jews—which was as large as that of Herod I. Agrippa could rightly call himself King of the Jews.

Although a political union with Trachonitis existed through the king's person, it seems quite improbable that the Jewry in Jerusalem took any interest in the non-Jewish communities of that district. We may take it for granted, therefore, that the Jews in Jerusalem did not count the years of Agrippa from the establishment of his reign in Trachonitis, but from the beginning of his rule in Galilee and Judea. This will be of major importance for the dating of the bronze coins under discussion. If the beginning of Agrippa's rule in the Jewish provinces of Galilee and Judea is viewed as per-

tinient, instead of the date he was installed in office, then the period of his government coincides exactly with the dates marked on the coins. These dates are "year 2," "year 3," "year 4," and thus fit perfectly into the pattern. When Agrippa entered Jerusalem as a king, the Jews began the coinage A.D. 42. This occurred in the second year of his reign in Jewish Galilee, and consequently his Hebrew coinage began with the "year 2." The "year 4" coincides with the year of Agrippa's death.

In discussing our Nos. 1 and 2 of the series, Professor A. Reifenberg, in his book on *Ancient Jewish Coins*, makes the following statement:

The small bronze coins (nos. 147 and 148) are usually attributed to the First Revolt, although no conclusive evidence had hitherto been available. Coin no. 147a, which is overstruck over a coin of Agrippa I (No. 59), clearly shows that it was struck after A.D. 44, that is at the time of the First Revolt.\*



FIGURE 14

Coin of the Jewish King Agrippa (grandson of King Herod), issued in Jerusalem under the Emperor Claudius. (Reifenberg, No. 59.)

Evidently, it was Professor Reifenberg's intention to establish that this overstruck coin with the "Zion" inscription could not have been issued *before* Agrippa. Although this is true, it still fails to prove conclusively that they were struck

\* See Plates X and XI.

during the First Revolt. Professor Reifenberg did not emphasize the fact that the Agrippa coin was the only quadrans overstruck. To us, however, this seems important. The evidence on this overstruck coin makes it obvious that it could not have been issued before the time of Agrippa, but this does not exclude the possibility of its having been issued *during* the time of Agrippa.

Until recently the year-2 coin of the "Zion" bronzes overstruck over the Greek Agrippa year-6 coin, as listed by Reifenberg, was the only known specimen of its type. We might be easily inclined to consider such a unique piece an accidental and unrelated occurrence because in cases of overstriking "chance" plays, of course, a great role. However, with the publication of a second coin by A. Kindler in the *Bulletin of the Palestine Exploration Society* of exactly the same description as the one listed by Reifenberg, the element of chance is eliminated and weighty evidence in favor of our own new theory seems established.

The "conclusive evidence" which Reifenberg claims for his theory that the overstruck bronze coin was issued during the First Revolt can be refuted on the basis of the very coins to which he refers. On these coins the inscriptions furnish proof that they actually were issued by King Agrippa I. Clearly the numbers on the coins coincide with the historical years as given by the sources. According to Josephus, Agrippa was installed as tetrarch in Trachonitis by Caligula shortly after the latter had become emperor in March A.D. 37. Agrippa reigned seven years and died about Easter A.D. 44. The overstruck coin to which Professor Reifenberg refers and the coin published by A. Kindler bear the dates "6" in Greek and the year "2" in Hebrew. We can show that the "year 6" in Trachonitis is the same as Agrippa's "year 2" in Judaea. In our comparative table we consider the official year as beginning with Sep-

tember. The year started customarily around the time of the autumnal equinox, based on the Seleucid era, while the reformed Asianic calendar of 9 B.C. set September 23, the birthday of Augustus, as the beginning of the official year.

TABLE OF KING AGRIPPA I

His reign in—

Year	Trachonitis	Year	Judea	Galilee *
1	Mar. 37–Sept. 37		—	—
2	Sept. 37–Sept. 38		—	—
3	Sept. 38–Sept. 39		—	—
4	Sept. 39–Sept. 40		—	—
5	Sept. 40–Sept. 41	1	—	Jan. 41–Sept. 41
6	Sept. 41–Sept. 42	2	Jan. 42–Sept. 42	Sept. 41–Sept. 42
7	Sept. 42–Sept. 43	3	Sept. 42–Sept. 43	Sept. 42–Sept. 43
8	Sept. 43–Easter 44	4	Sept. 43–Easter 44	Sept. 43–Easter 44

As we can see, Agrippa’s second year as “King of the Jews” coincides with his “year 6” in Trachonitis.

This reconstruction of the dates in Agrippa’s life receives further support from another coin published by Reifenberg, a coin with Agrippa’s name in Greek and the number “8.” We find a description of this specimen in *Ancient Jewish Coins*, with the following statement: “The date ‘8’ corresponding to 44/45 A.D. . . . does not contradict Josephus, according to whom Agrippa ruled seven years, since the first year of his reign need not necessarily have been a full year.”

We agree with Reifenberg that the year “8” does not contradict Josephus, but it cannot be deduced from this coin that Agrippa lived until A.D. 44/45, a date nowhere established by the sources. As we said before, Agrippa died at the time of Easter, 44, and our table shows that the coin “8” clearly was issued between September, 43, and Easter, 44.

\* No coins extant.



One more question might be raised: If Agrippa issued Greek coins with his name, why, then, did he not mint his name and title on the Jewish coins? It seems that had he done so, he would have gone against tradition. We know that neither Herod nor his son ever inscribed their names on coins in Hebrew. Evidently, that right was reserved for princes from priestly families. It appears to be quite understandable, therefore, that the inscriptions were chosen according to the circumstances and conditions of the time. It seems to us that Agrippa's choice was a good one.

The number on the coins must, of course, not be misunderstood as representing successive years in the epochs of "freedom" or of "redemption." The dates bear no direct relation to the slogans and should be read as

Freedom of Zion	year 2
Freedom of Zion	year 3
Redemption of Zion	year 4

and not as "Second year of the Freedom of Zion," and so on. The old theory fails to explain why after a supposedly new era had been established in Jerusalem—the era of "Freedom of Zion"—there do not exist three uniform issues all inscribed "Freedom of Zion." Also, if an era of "freedom" was at hand, why would it be arbitrarily transformed into an era of "redemption"? The change from "freedom" to "redemption" in the consecutive numbers of the coin series indicates that the date and the slogan were not related to each other, but that each one had a significance of its own.

In the *Bulletin of the Israel Exploration Society*, A. Kindler published a second coin, together with the "Zion" bronze of "year 2," which we have already discussed. This second type is a "Zion"-bronze-year-3 overstruck over bronze of procurator Pontius Pilate dated 17 or 18 (A.D. 30/31 or

31/32); the overstriking makes it difficult to decipher which of these years is correct. This coin and its time element favor our new theory that it was Agrippa I who issued the "Zion" bronzes.

Going back once more to the traditional assumption that the "Zion" bronzes were issued during A.D. 66-70, the years of the First Revolt, it would seem very strange that a procuratorial coin dating as far back as A.D. 30/31 or 31/32 should have been overstruck. Theoretically, of course, an overstriking may occur at any time after the original coin issue; however, it is always more likely that the time of the overstriking is close to that of the underlying original coin.

Furthermore, there were procuratorial coin issues A.D. 54 under Claudius, who issued two procuratorial coins, and under Nero, who issued a coin with his name, dated year 5—that is A.D. 58/59. Hence, at the time of the Revolt several coin types were extant which had been issued much closer to the Revolt than the much older procuratorial coins which were actually overstruck. Any of the later coins could much more readily be expected to have been overstruck than the early ones which actually bear the overstriking; for, in the case of the Agrippa coin only about twenty-five years had elapsed, while in the case of the third-decade Pilate coin almost an entire generation had passed.

On the other hand, when we accept the theory that Agrippa I issued the "Zion" bronzes, the chronological discrepancy is removed: the overstruck Greek Agrippa coins, according to our table, were issued during the very year of the overstriking.

We should remember that after the Pontius Pilate coin of the thirties the issuance of procuratorial coins was interrupted until A.D. 54. It was during Pontius Pilate's time, then, that the discontinuance occurred, probably as a result of the



FIGURE 15

Bronze coins with names of Roman emperors, issued in Jerusalem during the rule of the procurators. Compare the design of the right-hand coin in the second horizontal row and coins in the third row with Figures 14 and 13, respectively.

rule of a Jewish king; the procurator coin that was overstruck later was the last to be issued until the time of Emperor Claudius. It is likely, then, that the Pontius Pilate coin was still in circulation at the time of Agrippa I because no other type was issued for a long time after.

The two coins published by Kindler and the one by Reifenberg present us with three coins, all overstruck with the design types of the "Zion" bronzes. Two of these were unquestionably in circulation at the time of Agrippa I, and the third may well have been. The facts suggested by the three overstruck coins together with the "Agrippa table" lend strong support to our theory that helps to unravel an old numismatic problem. All the new evidence points toward the attribution of the "Zion" bronzes to Agrippa I.

On the basis of the new interpretation of the "Zion" coins, the designs chosen for the coins Nos. 1 and 2 of the series may be brought into an even closer relation with the reign of Agrippa. As we have noted, an *amphora* is represented on one side, a vine leaf and tendril on the other, just as on the small imperial bronze coins with the name of Julia issued at the beginning of Tiberius' reign. Alternating between success and misfortune, the career of Agrippa may have given sufficient grounds for such a choice. The re-establishment of amicable relationship with the imperial family, severed during the reign of Tiberius, may have been commemorated with a coin whose design imitated a Roman type.

It is now possible to answer the question why Agrippa I more or less copied the "thick" shekels by issuing a year-4 "Zion" bronze in a similar pattern. Mishnah sources tell us that Agrippa celebrated the *shmittah* period in line with established custom that went back to the Hasmoneans. Every time the early Hasmoneans kept *shmittah*, they used the occasion to coin a seventh-year issue of commemorative shekels.

Coins celebrating these occasions were given such an extraordinary shape that they were suitable as ceremonial medals and could hardly have been meant to circulate as money. That Agrippa transferred certain features of the historical shekel onto his own commemorative coins would be only natural as we read the following Mishnah passage:

After the close of the first festival day of the Feast (of Tabernacles), in the eighth year after the going forth of the Seventh Year, they used to prepare for him [the king] in the Temple Court a wooden platform on which he sat, for it is written, "At the end of every seven years in the set time . . . 11 (Deut. 31:10.)" The minister of the synagogue used to take a scroll of the Law and give it to the chief of the synagogue, and the chief of the synagogue gave it to the Prefect, and the Prefect gave it to the High Priest, and the High Priest gave it to the king, and the king received it standing and read it sitting. King Agrippa received it standing and read it standing, and for this the Sages praised him. And when he reached "Thou mayest not put a foreigner over thee which is not thy brother," 12 (Deut. 17:15)—Agrippa was of Edomite descent—his eyes flowed with tears; but they called to him, "Our brother art thou! Our brother art thou!" He read from the beginning of Deuteronomy to "Hear, (O Israel)"; 13 (Deut. 6:4) and the paragraphs "Hear, (O Israel)" . . . and "And it shall come to pass if ye shall hearken . . ." 14 (Deut. 11:13 ff.) and "Thou shalt surely tithe . . ." 15 (Deut. 14:22 ff.) and "When thou hast made an end of tithing . . ." 16 (Deut. 26:12 ff.) and the paragraph of the king, 17 (Deut. 17:14–20) and the Blessings and the Cursings, 18 (Deut. 27:15–26) until the end. With the same blessings with which the High Priest blesses them the king blesses them, save that he pronounces the blessing for the Feasts instead of the blessing for the forgiveness of sin. (*Mishnah*, "Sota," 7:8.)



The character and meaning of the designs of the coins in the series, our Nos. 3, 4 and 5, merit attention. Till now, the interpretations of these designs have not taken into consideration certain Talmudic sources dealing with King Agrippa. Certain passages in the Mishnah establish vital links between the coins and the reign and personality of this king.

Designs on these three coins depict various plants which have been interpreted as a *lulab* and *ethrog*, the two ritual plants, which are frequently found in Jewish art and are always represented in combined arrangement. The interpretation in this case, however, is not correct. The *lulab* consists of a palm branch in the center, with branches of the myrtle and of the willow of the brook on each side. There is only one *ethrog* to each *lulab*. The authentic representation is found on the flat shekels. On the bronze coin No. 5 a spray of many twigs can be seen with a center palm branch, all strewn with grapes, berries, or other fruits, represented by the dots, and flanked by two *ethrogim*. On the other types can be seen either two sprays with an *ethrog* between them, or only one *ethrog*. All these arrangements are contrary to the concept of *lulab* and *ethrog* as they appear in detail on the flat shekels. What is actually shown here is a realistic picture of the First Fruits, single ones, and others arranged in precious baskets. The ceremony is graphically described in the Mishnah, and Agrippa I receives a place of honor.

How do they set apart the First-fruits? When a man goes down to his field and sees a ripe fig or a ripe cluster of grapes or a ripe pomegranate, he binds it round with reed-grass and says, "Lo, these are First-fruits."

How do they take up the First-fruits to Jerusalem? The men of all the smaller towns that belonged to the Maamad gathered together in the town of the Maamad and spent the night in the open place of the town and came not into the

houses; and early in the morning the officer of the Maamad said, "Arise ye and let us go up to Zion unto the Lord our God."

They that were near to Jerusalem brought fresh figs and grapes, and they that were far off brought dried figs and raisins. Before them went the ox, having its horns overlaid with gold and a wreath of olive-leaves on its head. The flute was played before them until they drew nigh to Jerusalem. When they had drawn nigh to Jerusalem they sent messengers before them and bedecked their First-fruits. The rulers and the prefects and the treasurers of the Temple went forth to meet them. According to the honour due to them that came in, used they to go forth. And all the craftsmen in Jerusalem used to rise up before them and greet them, saying, "Brethren, men of such-and-such a place, ye are welcome!"

The flute was played before them until they reached the Temple Mount. When they reached the Temple Mount even AGRIPPA the king would take his basket on his shoulder and enter in as far as the Temple Court. When they reached the Temple Court, the Levites sang the song "I will exalt thee, O Lord, for thou hast set me up and not made mine enemies to triumph over me."

The rich brought their First-fruits in baskets overlaid with silver and gold, while the poor brought them in wicker baskets of peeled willow-branches and baskets and First-fruits were given to the priests.

There are three degrees among the First-fruits: the veritable First-fruits, the additions to the First-fruits, and what bedecks the First-fruits. The additions to the First-fruits may be of like kind, but what bedecks the First-fruits may be of some other kind. (*Mishnah*, "Tractate Bikkurim," Chapter III.)

The representation of the First Fruits on the coins follows exactly the description given in the *Mishnah*. The royal per-

sonality mentioned as offering the First Fruits in the Temple leads us back to the historical events and completes the link between the general description of a religious ceremony and the participation of Agrippa. It should be pointed out that Agrippa was a half-Jew, yet much loved by many of his people, and that he was acclaimed their "brother" at a public demonstration.

All this reinforces our contention that these coins were issued during a period of autonomy in domestic affairs as was the case under King Agrippa I. Although he was appointed by the Romans, he was fully accepted by his own people. If the coins with the inscriptions of "Freedom" and "Redemption" are seen from this point of view, they give life to the literary sources themselves, while the sources accurately set the coins in their proper time element.

Just as the first types of the series, the Nos. 1 and 2, illustrate Agrippa's relations with Rome, so the later three of the series demonstrate homage to his royal person. Here is a perfect example of how a literary source (the Mishnah in this case), coins and history are fused to re-create for us a specific moment in the life of the ancient Jews.

It is true that the concept of freedom and redemption, in a wider sense, carries with it the notion that these ideals cannot be achieved without fighting. Events have occurred in history, however, when liberty and independence were restored to a people under other circumstances, and the case discussed here illustrates such an occurrence in the reign of Agrippa I.

After viewing the story of the Agrippa coins, we might well ask ourselves this: If Agrippa made coins with Hebrew inscriptions, why shouldn't Herod—Agrippa I's grandfather—have done so earlier? The point is that Herod did. Both were

half-Jews who were disbarred from the high-priest office, but this did not prevent them from putting Hebrew inscriptions on their coins. Out of respect for tradition, however, both restrained themselves from putting their names on the coins with the Hebrew script.

To come back to our theory that the many coins of the fourth group were spread over about 170 years instead of the three and a half years of the Second Revolt, we will spell out the insurmountable difficulties in assigning these coins exclusively to the period of the revolt under Bar Kochba. After we have stated our objections, we will reconstruct for the reader the picture as we see it from a new vantage point.

### *The Myth of Bar Kochba's Coinage*

IN COMING TO the last stage of ancient Jewish numismatic history, namely the period between the two revolts, from A.D. 70 to 132, we refuse to accept the belief that nothing happened during this period as far as coining is concerned. We have already seen that this was a period far removed from political tranquillity, as demonstrated by Jewish interference in the Parthian War of Trajan. Throughout the Roman Empire the Jews stirred restlessly. In Judea and Galilee particularly, they were determined to stand on raw courage and defy Rome when she encroached on religious heritage and freedom. The Second Revolt was but a final flare-up of desperation that came after a string of sporadic insurrections.

Those historians who say that the "Bar Kochba" coins were issued as means of propaganda would only be right if they were to assert also that these coins propagated the revolt before it broke out or that the coins helped to prepare the revolt. Would Bar Kochba, the leader of the revolt, need propaganda *after* he seized power with popular consent and

acclaim? Why should so much effort and detail be lavished on the coin series when the goal had already been achieved?

To do justice to these coins, we will have to pay more attention to some basic technical details rather than romantically conceived historical interpretations.

A peculiarity of the Jewish denars is the fact that some of them are pierced. The holes on these denars already were punched in antiquity to allow people to string them as amulets. In the East, it is customary to string coins and wear them like jewelry. Importantly enough, the pierced Jewish denars do not have the same peculiarly straight edges as have the unpierced Jewish denars. (See Plate XII.) From this we gather that the pierced coins were made exclusively to be worn as amulets which ward off the evil-eye, heal, and exert protective power. Though Bar Kochba was able to rally most of the people around his banner, it is doubtful to the extreme that they would wear a "protective" amulet made from coins issued supposedly by the man who was accepted as a political and military, rather than a religious, figure.\* We feel that these coins had an entirely different historical setting, a setting more appropriate for the amulet coins.

Some of the things which have given misleading support to the attribution of coins to Bar Kochba are ancient documents found among the famous Dead Sea Scrolls. These are dated from the Second Revolt and are written and signed by Simon Bar Koziba Nasi of Israel. We would not hesitate to

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\* "Bar Cocheba, who resembled the wild hero of the Zealots, Simon bar Giora, regarded himself so invincible on account of his physical powers, his Messianic influence, and his great army that he is said to have uttered these words: 'O Lord! if thou do not help us, then, at least, do not help our enemies, and victory will be ours.'" (H. Graetz, *Popular History of the Jews*, revised edition, vol. 2, p. 316.)



join those who believe that these documents bear full proof for identifying the coin series in question as issues of Bar Kochba if it were not for the host of reasons given in our section on "Some Unanswered Questions." To propose a solution to the problem we offer an alternate interpretation. We suggest that the coins inscribed "Simon, Nasi of Israel," a person still unidentified as a minting authority despite the controversy of experts, were in circulation before Bar Kochba. After coming to power, Bar Kochba simply assumed the inscribed name and title much in the same fashion as did the several high priests of older times who wished to establish a token association with venerated or noble predecessors of the significant priestly office.

In analyzing ancient coins, our attention must not be diverted from the main task, namely to seek meaning from the peculiarities of each issue rather than to attempt to impose a strait jacket of preconceived ideas upon them. Even though the conventional identification of the supposed "Bar Kochba" coins sounds attractive, the weight of evidence on the coins themselves points in an entirely different direction.

An understanding of the ancient techniques of restriking coins in terms of designers' ingenuity, skill and historical setting leads to some surprising answers to numismatic puzzlers. The subject may seem formidable, but actually it is not very complicated if we follow it step by step from the ground up.

We might start with a comparison of the restruck "Bar Kochba" coin and a regular coin that has the same underlying pattern. This can be done most readily with the denarii. They were the most numerous and, furthermore, there are only Roman denarii extant. If we were dealing with the bronzes, for instance, we would have to cope with too many of the foreign coins. Instead, it is not difficult to find the Roman denar

which corresponds to the Roman traces beneath the restruck Jewish coin pieces. Some of those with remnants of patterns from Galba to Hadrian—or the A.D. 69–135 period which lay between these Roman emperors—have come down to us.

For purposes of comparison we choose several pieces of each:

- (a) Regular Jewish denarii
- (b) Jewish restruck denarii
- (c) Regular Roman denarii

It may come as a surprise that in comparing the Jewish with the Roman coins we find entirely different features in both coins: (a) and (b) have exactly the same group character, which is basically different from the character of (c), while (b) and (c) should be expected to be related to each other but different from (a). (See Plates XIII–XVII.)

The most striking criterion, next to the flat shape of the coins, is the edge of the flan. All Jewish denarii, the regular and the restruck ones, are characterized by their straight, sometimes partly hammered, edges, extending exactly rectangular to the flan, while the edges of the Roman denarii are bevelled and never hammered.

The same is true of the restruck tetradrachms, which, for the most part, appear to be overstruck upon Syrian tetradrachms of the imperial period. These Syrian tetradrachms do not date, as the Roman denarii, from Galba but already from the time of Nero.

The hammering of the edges has been explained as a precautionary measure to prevent splitting during the restriking process. This explanation, however, does not hold, because regular and restruck Jewish coins are hammered exactly in the same manner and, furthermore, numerous examples of overstruck cistophori from the time of Hadrian exist that

were not hammered and, nevertheless, have never split. Consequently, the hammering technique cannot have any relationship to the reminting process. Straight rectangular edges can be found anywhere and, furthermore, the imperial cistophori have the same flat shape as those of Jewish silver coins. Therefore, edges and shapes of the Jewish coins are neither unusual nor particularly conspicuous *per se*. Conspicuous, however, is their dissimilarity to the Roman coins.

Next to the fact that the restruck coins differ from the original pieces, another important observation can be made. No overstruck specimens seem to exist with bevelled edges or only slight impairment of the Roman coins, if Roman they were. The restriking appears to have been done painstakingly and very carefully, while at a time of unrest and strife only hasty and careless work might be expected.

Likewise, the bronze coins of these series exhibit an unusual feature. They frequently have grooves, thus conveying the impression that the coins were filed off or ground off. This treatment of the coins appears to have been intentional and planned to obliterate, as it were, traces of overstriking. Obviously, the work was performed with a serrated die brought to bear on the previously intact coin, because the grooves are always found in the corresponding places on the obverses and reverses, and always covering only part of the flan. The coins as such show no marks supporting the conclusion that they were restruck.

If Bar Kochba wished to establish his authority over the Roman money in circulation, he would have made use of a countermark, as was customary with conversion of money in antiquity, rather than to resort to all manner of elaborate operations. The question also remains, why gold never was overstruck if Roman coins at all were subjected to this process.

From all this the assumption appears warranted that actually it was not the original Roman coins that were overstruck and that the whole procedure was not a matter of emergency but deliberate and planned work. This means that the Jews, apparently, coined their own money, but by camouflaging it gave the impression of only overstriking *Roman* money. The need for such tactics seems to have been particularly marked in the case of silver currency.

The technical process may have been quite simple. Instead of casting a virgin flan, the copy of a Roman coin was cast, and the flan thus obtained was stamped in the regular manner. In this way the silver flan cast in the Jewish technique shows the specifically Jewish qualities: a keen-edged rim and a large diameter. This not only explains the similarity of restruck and regular Jewish coins but also the neat workmanship, as the underlying material was fully adapted to the Jewish die-stamps.

### *Some Unanswered Questions*

THE conventional theory that attributes these "deliverance" and "redemption" coins to Bar Kochba, which we have outlined briefly, may seem to the unwary a natural approach to the subject. Yet the very unique characteristics of these Hebrew coins defy such an oversimplified approach to the basic problems of identification and dating. In the main, the conventional theory fails to hurdle a good number of questions and historical facts. A sampling of some unanswered questions ought to convince us of that:

1) Some of the coins carry the dates "First Year" and "Second Year," respectively. If these dates indicate the first two years of the Revolt it may be asked why other coins are de-

void of any date, and why there are no coins dated "Third Year" in view of the fact that the rebels asserted themselves for a period of more than three years?

2) How is it possible that in the span of three and a half years an amazingly large collection of more than fifty different types, most of them of excellent quality, were issued, and this in a time of political unrest, when only a small quantity of inferior types should have been expected?

3) Why should Roman and other foreign coins have been overstruck during the Revolt? If it was the case of an emergency issue to save time, why was there sufficient time to create numerous new designs to be struck upon already existing coins? It may be noted in this connection that regular coins, especially bronzes, are more numerous than those re-struck.

4) Roman coins from the times of Nero to Hadrian are said to have been overstruck by the Jewish insurgents. At the time of the Revolt, Hadrianic coins were readily available. Yet, could this also be said of coins issued by the Roman emperors as far back as Nero, who had died over sixty years before, particularly when it is borne in mind that not a few odd pieces, but large numbers of coins were involved?

5) Quadrantes and leptons, the two basic denominations of Jewish coinage, are missing throughout the "Bar-Kochba" issues.

6) The oddity of three intermingling minting authorities—Simon (the Nasi), Eleazar (the Priest), Jerusalem (the City)—requires an explanation.

These questions make it clear that a drastic revision of some present coin classifications is essential. One of the possibilities which must be taken into consideration is that the Hebrew coins inscribed "freedom," "redemption" and "de-



liverance" were not war and siege or emergency issues at all.

Ultimately, we dare say, these coins will be of similar importance to historians as the famous Dead Sea Scrolls.

The task we set ourselves now is to explain the technical methods of coin analysis by which we arrived at a new classification structure.

### *A Study of Prototypes*

WHEN analyzing the coins, special attention should be given to their relation to Maccabean literature, and the numismatic angle must be considered by examining the particular features of the types and by tracing the subsequent development of these features. (See Plates XVIII-XXI.)

Once we question the theory that all coins were issued by one and the same man, we can explain the multiplicity of types and variations on the basis that they were made by many hands, and a development from one to the other variation can be traced which will enable us to determine some types as earlier, others as later, creations. Some types will be found to show delicate workmanship and suggestive contents, while others will appear crude and careless in execution, and arbitrary and disorganized in arrangement of pictorial motifs and inscriptions. In such cases the former must be considered the earlier types, and those of minor quality the later types.

Further analysis shows that the earlier types must be considered original designs, while the later types will prove to be imitations or copies of original designs. Instead of creating new patterns, later issuers copied existing motifs and inscriptions and intermingled them in order to make "novel" types, which, in reality, were not novel at all. Designs from different coins put together without regard for their compatibility are

proof in themselves that they originated later; style criteria occasionally furnish additional support for this theory.

In the following the original designs will be called "prototypes" and the later types will be called "copies." Through juxtaposition of the prototypes and the copies, the characteristics of both will become apparent. Additional features concerning the activities of the copyists will be discussed separately.

In using this terminology, we are fully aware of the fact that neither the word "copy" nor the term "imitation" is adequate for the work of these engravers, whose designs, in fact, deviated from the originals and yet were not the work of creative artists. In using the words "copies" and "copyists," the above described meaning is implied and we ask the reader to understand them on these terms.

#### PROTOTYPE I: *Tetradrachm*

OBVERSE: Temple; legend "Jerusalem" above the Hebrew letter *tav*.

REVERSE: *Lulab* with legend "Second year. Deliverance of Israel."

There are two series of tetradrachms with identical representation of the Temple; one has the legend "Jerusalem," the other the legend "Simon." Furthermore, some of these coins are dated "first year," others, "second year," and some are not dated at all. This, one would expect, should result in three pairs of coins, that is, altogether six different coins. However, this is not the case; only one pair is complete:\*

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\* In looking at a table of this kind, one must beware of superficial conclusions. A person not familiar with the subject might judge that the tetradrachm was originally issued in Jerusalem in the first and second year and that in the second year Simon took over the minting

	I	II
(a) First year	Jerusalem	—
(b) Second year	Jerusalem	Simon
(c) No date	—	Simon

Missing from the first year are the coins with the legend "Simon" and the undated coin with the legend "Jerusalem."

This table, even as it is, illustrates well what is said about the evolution of the prototypes and the creation of mingled types. It is evident beyond doubt that the obverse of the coin as a *type parlant* was designed originally with the inscription "Jerusalem," thus indicating the unity of Temple and City. When later the name of the Temple-City was replaced by the name of Simon the originality of the design was definitely destroyed.

But what applies to the obverse of the coin may also be true of the reverse, because this prototype of the tetradrachm illustrates a passage in the Second Book of the Maccabees which recounts the reconstruction of the Temple and the eight-day celebration of the work's completion in the manner of the *Sukkoth* festival, with *lulab* and *ethrog*:

Now Maccabeus and his company recovered the temple and the city. . . . And having cleansed the temple they made another altar . . . and offered a sacrifice after two years. . . . And they kept eight days with gladness, as in the feast of the tabernacles. . . . Therefore they bore branches and fair boughs and palms also. . . . They ordained also by a common statute and decree that every year those days should be kept of the whole nation of the Jews. (Maccabees, II, Chapter X.)

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and continued with the undated issue. The two gaps in this table are deceiving unless it is remembered that they can be filled with bronze coins of other designs.

It is mentioned specifically that the offering was repeated after two years; the coin in question bears the inscription "Second year." This corresponds exactly with the description in the Second Book of the Maccabees.

In accordance with these findings we have to put the tetradrachm *b/II* on the top of the listing of all of them. This will lead to the conclusion that apparently dating of our coins does not necessarily indicate the chronological order of issue.

As regards the style, this coin differs fully from the other "deliverance" and "redemption" coins. It is more rigid and conventional in the outlines of its design and shows more of a relationship to coins issued by Herod. It may have been designed by an artist who was still active at the Herodian court. Its similarity in style to the larger bronze of Herod is striking. Both have two horizontal bars connected by short verticals on which the main motif rests; both have an empty field below the horizontal bars and, finally, both show the main motif surmounted by a star or the starlike letter *tav*.

All these features indicate that the tetradrachm must be considered an early creation.

#### PROTOTYPE II: *First Brass*

OBVERSE: Wreath of pine branches. Inscription "Simon Nasi of Israel."

REVERSE: *Amphora*. Legend: "First year of the redemption of Israel."

This is in its form and execution another significant coin of the entire group. A complete harmony of script and design has been achieved. The coin must be considered to have been struck in commemoration of Simon, the Maccabean ruler. The inscription coincides with the story of the First Book of the Maccabees when the Jews were freed from the yoke of the

heathen and the people commenced to count "in the first year of Simon" (see also page 38):

Thus the yoke of the heathen was taken away from Israel in the hundred and seventieth year. Then the people of Israel began to write in their instruments and contracts: In the first year of Simon the High Priest, the governor and the leader of the Jews.

Simon, there, is called governor. Flavius Josephus gives him the title ethnarch, both of which exactly correspond to the Hebrew *nasi* (Josephus, *Antiquities*, xiii, vi/7).

The *amphora* is a storage jar because it has no spout, and it also relates to the events of the Maccabean period. It recalls the Hanukkah story handed down to us through *Megillath Taanith*. The story tells of the one-day oil ration that miraculously lasted for eight days, when the Temple was rededicated by the Maccabees, an event which forms the basis of the great popularity of the Hanukkah festival.

### PROTOTYPE III: *Second Brass*

OBVERSE: Palm tree. Legend "Simon Nasi of Israel."

REVERSE: Five-lobed vine leaf. Legend "First year of the redemption of Israel."

Here, too, the inscription is closely connected with the events described in the Book of the Maccabees and recapitulated above. The design recalls the peace of Solomon, which was reinstituted by Simon, as described in the Book of the Maccabees, when "everybody sat under his vine and his fig tree and there was none to fray them." (*Maccabees*, I, Ch. xiv, 12.)

This type appears in two variations. The principal basis of differentiation is the vine leaf. The coin considered as the



prototype bears a five-lobed vine leaf very delicately executed. The variation shows a three-lobed leaf which hardly resembles a vine leaf but is rather a combination of the five-lobed vine leaf and the three-clustered grape.

PROTOTYPE IV: *Third Brass*

OBVERSE: Three-stringed lyre. Legend "Simon."

REVERSE: Palm branch within a wreath. Legend "Deliverance of Jerusalem."

This coin illustrates the following passage of the First Book of the Maccabees:

They of the tower in Jerusalem . . . cried to Simon, beseeching him to be at one with them . . . and when he put them out from thence, he cleansed the tower from pollutions and entered into it the three and twentieth day of the second month in the hundred and seventy and first year with thanksgiving and branches of palm trees and with harps and cymbals and with viols and hymns and songs, because there was destroyed a great enemy out of Israel. He ordered also that that day should be kept every year with gladness. (Maccabees, I, xiii, 49 f.)

This is what the artist has expressed in his coin: The name of Simon without his title, as given in the passage quoted above, the wreath as a symbol of victory, the palm branch, and, lastly, the lyre as symbolization of festivity and music.

There are two specimens of the bronze with lyre design: the small one, described above, and a larger one. (See Plate XXIII.)

The small bronze must be assumed to be the prototype for the following reasons. The obverse bears the name of Simon in large, beautiful, clear-cut letters. The palm branch on the reverse, surrounded by the wreath, does not allow

much space for writing, yet the legend "Deliverance of Jerusalem" is well fitted into the design. This is not so with the large bronze. On its obverse this coin bears the inscription "First year of the redemption of Israel," while the name "Simon Nasi of Israel" appears on the reverse. The design—a palm branch within a wreath—has not been adapted to the change. The die-cutter had to engrave the name of Simon in small letters on the reverse, an expedient which did not do justice to the great feeling of reverence that Simon met with; the date, though, is stated on the obverse in very large letters. Therefore, this design is esthetically not satisfying and must be considered a failure. As the designer did not want to, or was not supposed to, alter the over-all design of the bronze with lyre, he left the design of the palm branch untouched and rather curtailed the legend to its present form. The larger bronze with lyre can be clearly discerned as put together from the prototypes II and IV.

PROTOTYPE V: *Denar*

OBVERSE: Two trumpets. Legend "Deliverance of Jerusalem."

REVERSE: Bunch of grapes. Legend "Simon."

An impressive passage in the letter of Antiochus VII, king of Syria, to Simon reads as follows: "As concerning Jerusalem and the sanctuary let them be free" (Maccabees, I, xv, 7). The design embraces the full contents of this sentence: the trumpets of freedom with the legend "Deliverance of Jerusalem" and the bunch of grapes taken from the golden vine which was posted in the Temple, to symbolize the sanctuary.

This coin must be considered a prototype, primarily because of its finished composition. In the neat and flawless relationship between script and picture the hand of a creative artist rather than a copyist must be discerned. In contrast,

inscriptions and designs on the other types of the denar with trumpets have been arranged in a confused and formless manner.

PROTOTYPE VI: *Denar*

OBVERSE: Jug with one handle, on right palm branch. Legend "Eleazar the Priest."

REVERSE: Within a wreath, inscription *Schmah*.

This coin gave rise to lively discussions. The name of Eleazar has been introduced in connection with the Bar Kochba revolt, although no personality with the rank of priest was mentioned in old sources as having been among the leaders of the revolt. The word *Schmah* was thought to be an abbreviation of the name of Simon, without consideration of the fact that such an abbreviation would neither be justifiable by lack of space nor compatible with the importance of Simon and the prominent placement of his name in the center of the coin. To our knowledge no denars exist with the name of Eleazar and the name of Simon instead of *Schmah*.

Eleazar does not relate to any historical figure who issued coins. The Eleazar in question is Eleazar the priest, son of Aaron, mentioned frequently in the Old Testament with exactly the same spelling in Hebrew. This is the same Eleazar whom the priests, especially the Sadduceans, considered their Biblical ancestor:

The posterity of Zadok performed priestly services in the Temple from the time of Solomon. . . . The Chronicler in his genealogy traces back the house of Zadok to Eleazar, the elder son of Aaron, thus giving us to understand that the Zadokites had, if not the only, still the first and nearest claim to the priesthood (I Chron. XXIV:1-31). This procedure of the Chronicler at the same time proves that the name of

the ancestor of this race was still vividly remembered in his time and therefore in the Greek period also. (Schuerer, *op. cit.* II, II, p. 33 f.)

The jug represents a sacrificial vessel of the priests and is entirely different from the storage jar of prototype II. The palm branch likewise symbolizes the sacred duties of the priests. Lastly, the word *Schmah* indicates passages from the Bible to be recited by the priests in the daily religious services, as described in the Mishnah:

The priests descended into the Hall of Hewn Stones to recite the *Schmah*. The official said to them: Recite the one benediction! Which they did, then they recited the ten commandments, then the passage of *Schmah*. (Schuerer, *op. cit.* II, I, p. 294.)

From the numismatic point of view this undated Eleazar denar must be considered a dignified and accomplished glorification of priesthood. In today's usage this coin would perhaps be called a medal designed in tribute to the clergy.

Undoubtedly, it was not by accident that the designer chose silver, a precious metal, and not bronze for the coin.

#### THE LATER COPIES OF THE PROTOTYPES

All coins not listed among the prototypes should be considered as belonging to the later group. The description of the prototypes has disclosed the limited number of standardized inscriptions and devices which recur on all these copies of a later time. No outsider was admitted to the inner circle of the approved patterns.

The inscriptions are Simon Nasi prince of Israel; Simon; Eleazar the Priest; Jerusalem; First year of the redemption of Israel; Second year of the deliverance of Israel; Deliverance of Jerusalem; *Schmah*.

The devices are Temple; *lulab* and *ethrog*; palm branch; palm tree; vine leaf; bunch of grapes; jug; *amphora*; trumpets; lyre.

The copyists used all these motifs and inscriptions and worked them into various combinations that modified their meaning. This is best evidenced by the large bronze with lyre which combines elements from prototypes II and IV.

Motifs were not only combined deliberately, but also altered in themselves. For instance, the wreath of pine branches was converted into an olive wreath, and out of the five-lobed pattern of a vine leaf and the three-clustered grapes develops the design of a three-lobed leaf. Other instances are the letter *tav* found above the Temple on prototype I. This letter became a star and later was replaced by a wavy line. In the case of the lyre, the design was enlarged, the number of strings increased, and the entire pattern became more decorative as compared with the earlier coins and symbolically more intricate. (See Plates XXII, XXIII, XXVII.)

The inscriptions, however, remained unaltered, but were frequently not coupled with matching motifs. It does not make sense when the picture of the Temple and the inscription "Simon" are juxtaposed. The only inscription to go with the Temple would have been "Jerusalem." On the other hand, the name "Jerusalem" appeared on the reverse of a bronze whose obverse already bore the inscription "Deliverance of Jerusalem."

The repetition of motifs and inscriptions finds a parallel in the "Restorations" of the Roman emperors. In Jerusalem, too, the inclination toward traditional values, the tendency to dwell on the achievements and merits of the forefathers and, lastly, the popularity of certain pictorial motifs with the public may have been the reason for keeping to the well-worn grooves of tradition.



Coins have an unfortunate habit of celebrating events in retrospect: A favourite motif will appear time after time, and only its earliest occurrence will be a clue to its time of origin. As a rule, therefore, coins only provide a *terminus ante quem* [a time before which they must have appeared], and the reappearance of the same type in a later year may not necessarily imply that another event of the same sort had then occurred—only that the first occurrence was still deemed to be capable of stirring the imagination of the public. (Lepper, *Trajan's Parthian War*, p. 33.)

### *New Conclusions*

It is understandable why coins referring to "deliverance" and "redemption" have been mistakenly dated as appearing during the time of a great revolt. Still, it appears strange that the thought has never before been expressed that the coins in question were issued in *commemoration* of an actual period of fighting rather than during that period itself.

The period after Herod and his son Archelaus—when the memory of the Maccabees was most vivid—was one of those particular eras in which people expressed a desire to be reminded through their coins of the Maccabean heroes' deeds. In fact, today's practice of minting medals and coins to commemorate past events or deceased persons is no different from ancient custom.

We have shown the close connection between the "deliverance" and "redemption" coins and the content of the Books of the Maccabees, emphasizing the spiritual revival of the Jewish people after the expulsion of Archelaus A.D. 6. In view of the multitude of coin shapes and forms, a minting period of long duration must have taken place. Since this period undoubtedly ended with the Bar Kochba revolt, the beginning of the period itself must be set at an early date.

On the basis of all this, the minting of the prototypes must be set before the time of the Roman procurators who administered Judea, so that the minting must have begun as early as the reign of Augustus, 27 B.C. to A.D. 14. Assuming that the prototypes appeared during the first decades of the Christian era, the activities of the copyists must have commenced about the middle of the reign of Tiberius, in the vicinity of A.D. 25.

An objection could be raised to the effect that the minting of coins by the Jews could not have taken place during the era of the procurators. The Romans, it could be argued, would not have tolerated the issuing of coins which included silver, even though the inscriptions "deliverance" and "redemption" had no hostile meaning. It has been assumed heretofore that the Romans in Jerusalem issued only a few quadrantes with the names of the emperors, but that, generally, Roman and other foreign currency were in circulation. On the other hand, it should be taken into consideration that the Jews were then not a conquered but an allied nation and hence not without rights, which is significant because of the rigid conception of Roman formal law. If, during the reign of Herod, they had the right of coinage they would have kept this right, just as other Palestinian cities likewise possessed the right of coinage.

It may be mentioned in this connection that it seems incorrect to assume that the small bronzes bearing the names but not portraits of the emperors were also issued by authority of the procurators. They ought to be judged by the same criteria as, for instance, the issues from Ascalon or other Palestinian cities; in other words, they should also be considered autonomous issues of the city of Jerusalem.

In the case of the small bronzes the reasons to assume that they were issued by the Jews are even more persuasive, since

among the small bronzes minted in Jerusalem there is one of Agrippa which under no circumstances could have originated from a Roman mint. It is surprising, however, that the issue is limited to small denominations, although, in earlier times, the Herods and other authorities had issued also the higher denominations. This leads to the assumption that the "deliverance" and "redemption" coins were intended to fill the gap in the denominations. The Romans, presumably, did not object to the use of Hebrew in inscriptions, since regard for local practices was part of Roman colonial policy. It is also likely that the Romans did not attach any particular importance to the contents of the inscriptions. Quite different is the emphasis placed on the contents of these inscriptions by modern historians.

Rome found there [in the East] civilizations older and deeper-rooted than their own. She absorbed them politically but in point of culture received more than she gave. So, in coinage, she found a multitude of communities—states and cities—long established in their right of coinage, with well established standards and traditions. To check this momentum and to enforce instead a completely Roman coinage was beyond Rome's desire, as perhaps beyond her powers. She contented herself with retaining a monopoly of the gold coinage, with limiting the new coinage of silver to certain definitive issues. The token coinage she left almost entirely in the hands of communities themselves. (Mattingly in the *British Museum Catalogue*, "Roman Empire," vol. I, p. XXIV.)

Undoubtedly, the Jews enjoyed all advantages of a *pax romana* at that time. This was especially true with regard to commerce and trade, and it was only natural that a wealth of coins went along with it.

The question now arises as to what happened after the

First Revolt and its tragic end A.D. 70. The Temple was destroyed, but the city of Jerusalem still existed and life continued. Much business, however, was conducted in a town adjoining Jerusalem, probably in Betar. Many coins must have been issued in that town; it is proven by the fact that to this day a large number of coins still are being found there.

Many of these finds consist of restruck coins. The question is: were these restruck coins produced exclusively during the Second Revolt, or also in the period between the First and the Second revolts?

As a matter of fact, overstriking occurs only on coins corresponding to the imperial series from Nero to Hadrian. It is precisely that period between the First and the Second revolts against the Romans, that is the time from Nero to Hadrian, which has been uncharted territory in Jewish numismatics. The view cannot be dismissed lightly that the coins "went along" with the emperors, namely it was the contemporary types that served for the blanks, and that the series can be dated from the reigns of the respective emperors.

It is likewise conceivable that mints continued to exist in Jerusalem and in Betar and that the Jews continued to strike the small Agrippa coins during the period between the two revolts. The younger Agrippa was king of Judea in that period for about fifty years and the finds of the Agrippa bronze are tremendous. Along with this coin, other types may have been minted and, as a front for the Romans, may have been claimed to constitute overstruck Roman coins only, and not a truly new currency. From a historical point of view, this theory confirms what has previously been established on a numismatic basis, namely that the series does not constitute an emergency issue but was a regular and well-considered act of the minting authorities.

The concept of freedom is not always identical with po-

litical independence and liberation from foreign rule. Likewise, the Jews often bore foreign rule patiently, if only they were permitted to practice their customs and religion. "Liberation" was essential to them mainly from the angle of religious freedom; political freedom in the modern sense played only a secondary role.

The failure to make this vital distinction has led numismatists to attribute wrongly the coins of freedom and redemption to a period of *political* revolt. However, the beginnings of these coins belong really in an epoch in which a worldwide religious and spiritual upheaval originated.

The intensity of feeling apparent in the Books of the Maccabees is important in Jewish numismatics because emotional attitudes similar to those found in the literature made their way into the coins of the period, once Antigonus had shown that coins could be made suitable vehicles for the expression of emotional factors.

It should not be forgotten that in antiquity coins were the only means of mass reproduction of writing and drawing. For this reason, their significance as to contents and symbolic meaning is great. Such symbolism closely related to the Maccabees can be found in the coins of deliverance and redemption. These coins convincingly illustrate the events of the Maccabean period, with sometimes amazing detail.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Fertility Symbols on Ancient Jewish Coins \*

THE MIGRATION of symbols throughout the ancient world is a strange and absorbing story. On a primitive level, symbols are devices by which man puts identification tags on the mysterious forces of nature that surround him; by neatly pigeonholing things he does not understand he creates the illusion of security amid an alien world. To make the unreal real, he interprets his animate and inanimate surroundings in terms of the familiar. Since he is most familiar with his own person, he views everything in terms of his own image and his own limited knowledge. Sometimes these interpretations assume the structure of fairly consistent mythologies as we find them among the Assyrians, Hindus and Egyptians of old, so that their gods and goddesses are but overblown humans with virtues and foibles that are all too human.

Although there is a strong base of primitive logic in these myths, we should not overlook the pattern of ethics that is woven into the myth structures. Man is a thinking animal and his imaginative mind has a tendency to philosophize personal experience. He is likely to speculate on the origin of things, destiny, birth, death, procreation, justice and morality. His rituals and festive celebrations revolve around the

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\* The Jewish coins referred to in this chapter are reproduced in the picture section and throughout the text. See particularly those coins which show the fertility symbols above the Temple pillars (Plates XXIV-XXIX).

activities which sustain his life so that ancient man drew on his most immediate experiences for inspiration: seeding, planting, harvesting, hunting, warring, fishing and food-gathering. The symbols that have come down to us from ancient times have been primarily agricultural with stress on those elements that embody the life force which insures the continuity of all things.

In discussing the universality of myths, Erich Fromm summarized it in this way:

The myths of the Babylonians, Indians, Egyptians, Hebrews, Greeks are written in the same language as those of the Ashantis or the Trukese. The dreams of someone living today in New York or Paris are the same as the dreams reported from people living some thousand years ago in Athens or Jerusalem. The dreams of ancient and modern man are written in the same language as the myths whose authors lived in the dawn of history . . . the one universal language the human race has ever developed, the same for all cultures and throughout history. (*The Forgotten Language.*)

We may agree that the basic emotional experiences of man have remained the same through the ages, yet the symbols which express those experiences through a kind of artistic shorthand drawing have taken on a different significance. There has been a constant translation and reinterpretation of these symbols, often causing their original meaning to be lost or deliberately obscured. Much of the earthy character of the symbols which grew out of man's most immediate and profoundly unashamed experiences have been watered down by historians in order to make them conform with our concept of drawing-room niceties.

Coins played a conspicuous part in making the old civilizations aware of each other's cultural ideas. Conquerors, mer-

chants, sailors, soldiers, travellers and slaves were the carriers of coins and the cultural values which they represented. Even the slightest acquaintance with the economic life of the ancient world makes clear the arterylike trade routes and sea lanes through which not only flowed commerce but also the symbols and ideas of many nations. It comes as very little surprise, then, to see imitations and counterfeits of the Greek coins issued by Philip, or Alexander, of Macedon all over the ancient world, or to see on Scandinavian coins rough imitations of the symbols belonging to the distant country of Bactria, which was located in Western Asia near the Hindu Kush Mountains, or to see ancient Chaldean symbols turn up in Italy.

The more we learn about ancient civilizations the more astounding becomes the picture of the cultural avenues that lay open among Hindustan, Assyria, Egypt, Babylon, Palestine, Tyre, Sidon, Carthage, Etruria, Greece and Rome as well as lesser-known regions. What strikes one immediately is the relative tolerance displayed by ancient men toward each other's religious symbols. They did not hesitate to accept them in full, transfigure them in many ways, incorporate them with existing forms, or reinterpret them. As long as there was no resistance to one another's symbols and polite acknowledgment of their religious significance, there existed what might be termed an unwritten "cultural agreement" that required payment of respect but not homage.

The major breaks in cultural and religious relations in the ancient world occurred when the Jews at various stages of their development refused to subscribe to the "agreement." The rupture in relations was even more severe when the early Christians, who drew inspiration from Jewish sources, set themselves apart from Roman practices.

Though Judaism and Christianity followed an independ-



FIGURE 16

An oval-shaped cameo, originally representing Poseidon and Athene, later, with minor adaptations, became a "temptation scene." Note the serpent at the base of the tree. One such touched-up cameo was found with Hebrew inscriptions referring to Adam and Eve (Cabinet of Antiquities, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris).

ent development, they were not immune to the pressures of surrounding cultures, many of whose symbols came in by way of the backdoor. In discussing the adaptation and adoption of ideas by the Jews, Theodore H. Gaster points to some of the numerous examples.

Nowhere, perhaps, is the absorption of foreign elements by Judaism more strikingly brought out than in the decora-

tions of synagogues, tombstones, and catacombs during the Graeco-Roman age. Discoveries made during the past twenty-five years have revealed that these very commonly include representations of pagan gods and goddesses and of figures and scenes drawn from pagan mythology. In the ancient synagogue at Chorazin, for example, there are pictures of centaurs and of the mace of Heracles; at Sheikh Abreiq, there is an Amazon and two Psyches; at Capernaum there is a frieze depicting six Cupids; at Jaffa, there is a typically Dionysiac design of a vine and a tiger; while elsewhere there are representations of Helios, the sun-god, of Leto and (on an amulet) of Hecate. These latter, no doubt, are extreme cases, for there is as yet no definite proof—though the theory has indeed been advanced—that the Jews attached to these pagan designs any deeper spiritual interpretations of their own, that is, that they were ever anything more than mere mechanical imitations of a contemporary convention. Nevertheless, even on this cruder level, they illustrate in striking fashion the constant tendency of Israel to accommodate “the beauties of Japhet in the tents of Shem.” (*The Holy and the Profane*.)

Many of the symbols here noted already made their appearance on earlier Jewish coins, a fact which we will discuss more fully. At this point we may well ask: How much stronger was the foreign influence centuries before the Graeco-Roman period and before the Jewish communities were well-knit culturally? The Graeco-Roman period from which the examples are drawn begins after the story of the ancient Jewish coins stops and it is clear that the Jews were most prone to foreign cultures in their earliest times before they achieved rigid political and religious institutions.

The process of adopting and modifying foreign symbols or ideas should not be regarded as mere counterfeit or imitation; in many instances it became a new, creative act which



broadened religious concepts. Then again the mass of accumulated historical evidence should make us wary of fixing the origin of symbols and rites as being exclusive with any one civilization. As anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn puts it, "Given the nature of the human mind, the inevitabilities of the human situation, and the principle of limitation of possibilities, it is hardly surprising that people who have had no direct or indirect historical contact have hit upon the same, or approximately the same, solution to identical or similar problems posed by the human conditions." A similar view is held by psychologists who explain mythology and symbolism as "humanistic" forms for which the mind has a decided preference. However, in that part of the ancient world with which we are concerned there were so many physical and cultural migrations that no peoples remained entirely isolated from the cross-currents of ideas.

From the welter of ideas we can sort out popular patterns. There was for example the familiar practice of explaining an exalted human personality by ascribing to it "divine fatherhood." Arnold Toynbee points to that "ubiquitous and ever recurring myth—'a primordial image' if there ever was one—of the encounter between the Virgin and the Father of the Child. The characters of this myth have played their allotted parts on a thousand different stages and under an infinite variety of names." The practice of circumcision, animal sacrifice, communal celebrations at harvests, signing door lintels with animal blood, all these were assimilated into ancient Jewish ritual. Two concepts, however, that stand out uniquely are the *messianic idea* of a final redeemer who will bring with him a golden age—a Jewish hope that evolved from an early history of hardships,\* and *monotheism*—which was

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\* This theme is fully developed by Joseph Klausner in *The Messianic Idea in Israel*. New York, 1955.

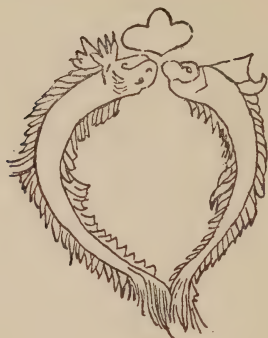


FIGURE 17

A Buddhistic emblem in which two fishes represent the *yonis* and above them a symbol of the divine trinity. (See also Figure 6.)

transfigured into a pure form by the Jews.

Judaism, as did Christianity later, also transfigured many universal notions. All these adaptations, it must be clearly emphasized, do not detract from the validity of religion. In acknowledging the borrowings and minimizing the importance of originality, we expose something that is more fundamental for our coin study, namely the points of contact between the ancient civilizations that allowed the free flow of symbols and their placement on coins.

We cannot subscribe to the idea that if a more "original" source for an idea, symbol, or literary work turns up, the value of the "copy" or "parallel" is lessened. Such finds are of primary historical interest and do not destroy esthetic and spiritual values. For example, several years ago Dr. Samuel Kramer translated a poetic essay found on Sumerian clay tablets that date back 3,600 years. It tells of a righteous man who is plagued by misfortune but stands by his god and ultimately sees better days. The parallel between this essay and



# PLATE I

This row of "thick" silver shekels and halfshekels is contained in the great Catalogue of the British Museum, vol. "Palestine."



1



2



3



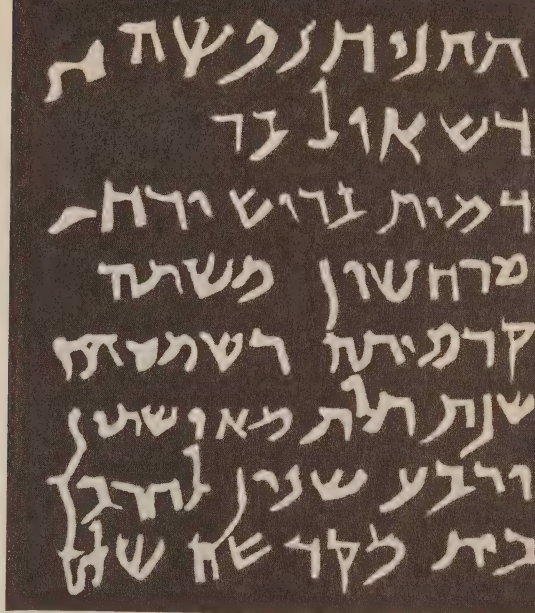
4

## PLATE II

Nos. 2. and 3. are variations of the first and second shekels, not contained in the British Museum Catalogue. The four variations demonstrate the development of the type. (1. and 4. *British Museum Collection*; 2. *Rogers Collection*; 3. *Hunterian Collection*.)



Copy of the inscription  
on the tombstone.



The dimensions of the inscribed part of the stone, as shown by the rubbing, are  $6\frac{1}{2}$  inches high by 6 broad.

The text is as follows :—

- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| תתניה נפשה        | 1. Rested be the soul                     |
| דשאל בר . . . . . | 2. of Saul, son of . . . . . ,            |
| דמית בריש ירח     | 3. who died on the first of the month     |
| מרחשון משתה       | 4. Marḥeshwan of the year                 |
| קדמיתה דשמטתה     | 5. the first of the shemittā              |
| שנת תלת מא ושתין  | 6. the year three hundred and sixty       |
| ורבע שנין לאחרבן  | 7. and four years after the destruction   |
| בית מקדשה שלם     | 8. of the house of the sanctuary. Peace ! |

### PLATE III

The historic importance of the *shmittah* institution in the life of the Jewish people is well known to those familiar with the customs of ancient Palestine and modern Israel. Selling, buying and consuming of agricultural products, and the selling and leasing of farmland were entirely subject to the regulations of the *shmittah* laws which have been preserved for us in detail in the rabbinic literature. Even in our own time the influence of *shmittah* is noticeable in Israel.

The practice of counting years according to *shmittah* periods is illustrated by archeological evidence on tombstones found in Palestine. One such tombstone inscription is reproduced here.

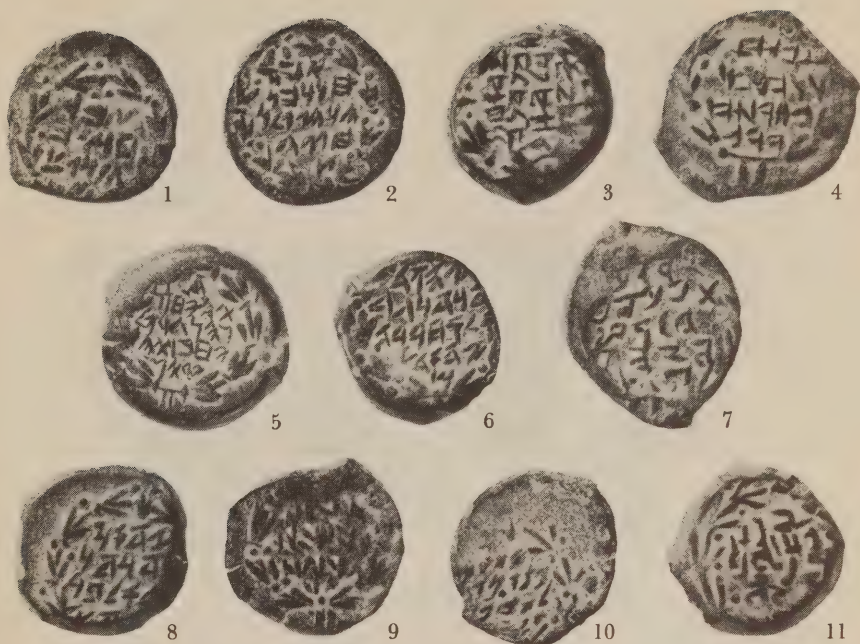
(Source: *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement*, October 1925, pp. 207 ff.)





#### PLATE IV

Copper shekels by King  
Mattathias Antigonus,  
simulating by shape  
and weight the earlier  
"thick" shekel. (*British  
Museum Collection.*)

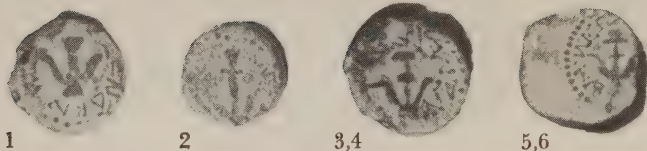


# PLATE V

Samples of different kinds of artistic script on the High Priest coins: 1. Jehochanan, without the inscription "*Chever* of the Jews"; 2. same, with the inscription "*Chever* of the Jews"; 3. same; 4. same; 5. same, with letter "A" on top; 6. Jehuda; 7. Jehonathan; 8. same; 9. same; 10. same; 11. Jonathan.

See text page 74.

# PLATE VI

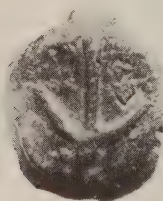


Obverses of anchor-wheel quadranses in the *Wirgin Collection*.



Reverses of anchor-wheel quadranses in the *Wirgin Collection*.

Obverse and reverse of two bronze coins  
from Italy—Third century.



B.M.C., vol.  
"Italy," page 43



B.M.C., vol.  
"Italy," page 140

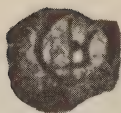


Etruscan bronze coin—Third century.  
B.M.C., vol. "Italy," page 23

PLATE VII



A



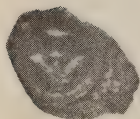
A



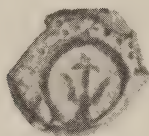
B



B



C



D



D



E



F

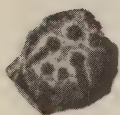


G

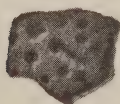


G

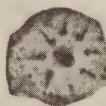
Obverses of leptons in the *Wirgin Collection*.



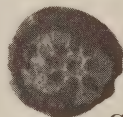
A



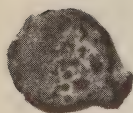
B



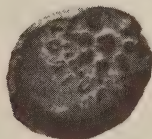
C



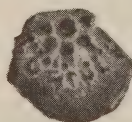
C



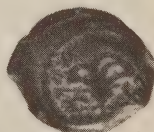
C



D



E



F



G



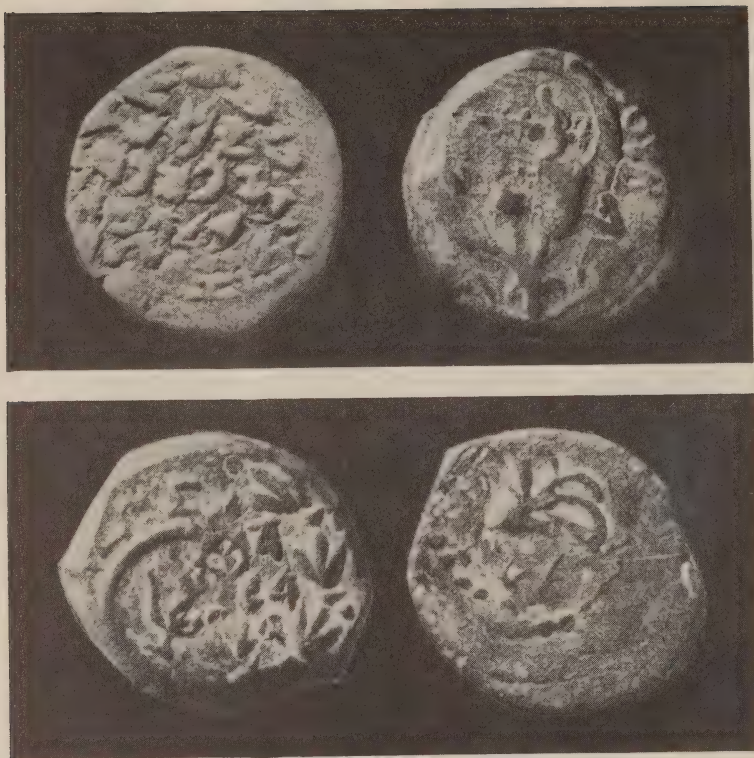
G



G

Reverses of leptons in the *Wirgin Collection*.  
See text pages 87 and 93.





*Wirgin Collection*

### PLATE VIII

Two examples of the Alexander coin with anchor and flower, upon which the High Priest Jonathan stamp was overstruck.

We observe here the mating of the symbols of cornucopiae and anchors on one and the same side of the coin.

Later on, this idea was adapted by Herod, who used both symbols to decorate the two sides of a new coin.



PLATE IX

No. 1: bronze coin by Herod I; No. 2: flat silver tetradrachm (prototype I, Plate XVIII). Similarity of style and Herod's activities as Temple builder suggest that Herod is responsible for the design of the tetradrachm.



1

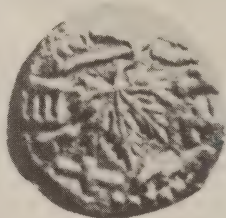
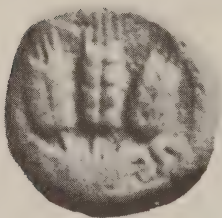


2



# PLATES X-XI

These are pictures of the overstruck bronze coins which bear evidence of the most probable date of issue of the Zion bronzes.



The coin of King Agrippa dated from the year "6."

The Zion coin dated from the year "2."

*British Museum Collection*



A specimen where the Zion coin from the year "2" is struck over the Agrippa coin from the year "6." This coin is in the *Reifenberg Collection*.



A similar coin from the collection of A. Kindler, published in the *Bulletin of the Israel Exploration Society*, vol. XVII, 1951, Nos. 1-2, pp. 65-66.



A coin issued in Palestine under the Procurator Pontius Pilatus and dated from the year 17 or 18.

*British Museum Collection*

The Zion coin dated from the year "3."



A specimen where the Zion coin from the year "3" is struck over the Pontius Pilatus coin. It is in the *Kindler Collection* and published in the above-mentioned article.

## PLATE XII

This is the picture of a pierced Jewish denar. It is a standard feature of the pierced denars that they possess regular bevelled edges of the flan, exactly like the Roman denars. This is in important contrast to the unpierced Jewish denars, whose edges are strictly vertical to the surface of the coin, with the corners almost blade-sharp.



The difference in the outside appearance of pierced and unpierced types must be attributed to two kinds of manufacturing processes of the flans.

We cannot assume that their appearance is purely accidental. The fact that each type adhered strictly to the rule makes it certain that we have to deal with two separate minting methods. It is interesting to note that even the so-called barbaric (unpierced) Jewish denars were made with the sharp-cornered, straight-edged flans.

*Wirgin Collection*

## PLATES XIII—XIV—XV

### THE DOUBLE-STRUCK DENARII

These pictures illustrate the result of overstriking Roman denarii with Jewish coin patterns. According to the version in the British Museum Catalogue, Roman coins were flattened by means of a punching device, after their edges were hammered, in order to avoid cracking of the coin. The first coin shown is a regular Roman denar; the next is the only known flattened coin of the type discussed above; the last picture represents a double-struck Jewish denar.

On the next page we display the edges of such Roman and Jewish denarii. Nos. 1 and 2 are Roman; Nos. 3, 4, 5 are Jewish. We note that the former are rounded while the others are straight and at right angles to the surface of the coins. Actually there are no traces of hammering on the edges. Therefore we have to assume that the different shapes of the edges were acquired during the casting of the flans.







*British Museum Collection*



*Wirgin Collection*



1

2

3

4

5

# PLATE XVI



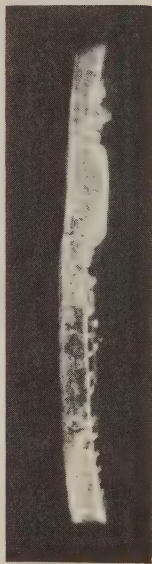
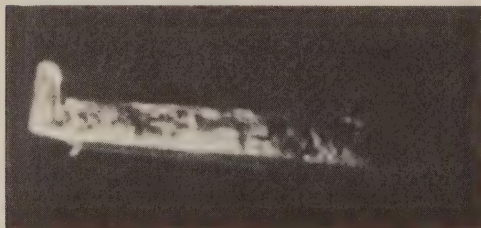
*Wirgin Collection*

Here is a Jewish double-struck denar, this time, however, with a small defect on the obverse in the shape of a metal bubble. The bubble is located at the edge of the coin. The pictures of this part of the coin's circle show clearly how the bubble protrudes from the edge.

From this situation we may draw some decisive conclusions. The bubble could not have existed before the Jewish pattern was stamped on the prepared flan because the Jewish die would have eliminated it. However, if it is the result of the Jewish stamping, how could it become an integral part of the edge?

We can as well assume that actually this was a truly Jewish denar made from a virgin flan and that the Roman traces were later stamped on it.

This coin is a good example of how much we are in the dark about the manufacturing processes of the ancients.





*Case History of a Pair of Dies for Jewish Denars With Vine Tendril and Lyre*

In the first picture we have the die in good order, only the lyre is a little blurred. There are traces of an underlying Roman coin visible.

In the second picture the coin is similar to that above; however, the die incurred damage. In the right lower corner a hole developed, which partly absorbed the first letter of the pertinent inscription.

In the third picture we have the coin on virgin flan in about the same condition as the above.

In the fourth picture there is also a virgin flan (no Roman traces), but the deterioration progressed, fully destroying the letter.

Thus we have identified the four impressions made by the same die; two impressions were made on flans having Roman traces, the other two on virgin flans without such traces.

Points of importance to be observed are the following:

When we examine very closely the contours of the four coins we see that all are exactly alike. They are not really circular, but rather a little egg-shaped in a way peculiar to all four flans.

We know that the coins in rows 1 and 2 are not evenly thick. On top of the lyre the coin is about fifty percent thicker than at the bottom of the lyre. This is partly due to a sharp elevation just next to the edge of the flan, thus creating a groove at the top of the lyre. It is at this point where the Roman traces are visible.

Specimens in rows 3 and 4 have the stamping in exactly identical positions with relation to the slightly egg-shaped form of the flan. Peculiar is the off-center position of the vine-tendril stamping, which is exactly identical on both specimens—proof of the precision work by the ancient craftsmen. It may be that the space thus left open was meant to provide for a clear display of underlying Roman traces. How this worked out is visible in row 2, while on specimen in row 1 these traces are also visible at the right side.

The crucial problem is: What kind of flans were used for specimens in rows 1 and 2, or those with the Roman traces. If regular Roman coins were used for overstriking, how is it that their singular shape is one hundred percent identical with the coins in rows 3 and 4, which are *not* overstruck coins? The solution offered in the text is that the Jews manufactured copies of Roman coins for overstriking. In the same manufacturing process there were produced regular virgin flans and fake Roman coins, hence the identity of both types with regard to the contour of the flans and its straight, sharp vertical edges. It is a fact that Roman silver coins, like all other ancient coins of that period, come in all kinds of irregular and never identical shapes. (See prototype V—Plate XXI—for identical shape of flan.)





*British  
Museum  
Collection*

Prototype I—*Tetradrachm*.

*Obverse:* Temple; legend "Jerusalem," above the Hebrew letter *tav*.

*Reverse:* *Lulab* with legend "Second year. Deliverance of Israel."

This prototype of the tetradrachm illustrates a passage in the Second Book of the Maccabees, which recounts the reconstruction of the Temple and the eight-day celebration of the work's completion, in the manner of the *sukkoth* festival, with *lulab* and *ethrog*:

Now Maccabeus and his company recovered the temple and the city. . . . And having cleansed the temple they made another altar . . . and offered a sacrifice after two years. . . . And they kept eight days with gladness, as in the feast of the tabernacles. . . . Therefore they bore branches and fair boughs and palms also. . . . They ordained also by a common statute and decree that every year those days should be kept of the whole nation of the Jews.



*Wirgin Collection*



Prototype II—*First brass.*

*Obverse:* Wreath of pine branches. Inscription "Simon Nasi of Israel."

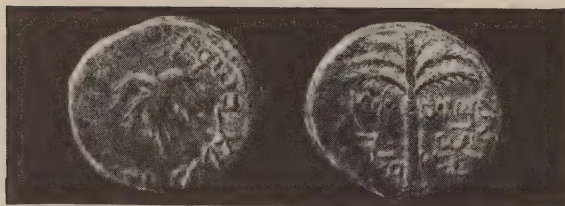
*Reverse:* Amphora. Legend: "First year of the redemption of Israel."

This is in its form and execution another significant coin of the entire group. A complete harmony of script and design has been achieved. The coin must be considered to have been struck in commemoration of Simon, the Maccabean ruler. The inscription coincides with the story of the First Book of the Maccabees, when the Jews were freed from the yoke of the heathens and the people commenced to count "in the first year of Simon":

Thus the yoke of the heathen was taken away from Israel in the hundred and seventieth year. Then the people of Israel began to write in their instruments and contracts: In the first year of Simon the High Priest, the governor and the leader of the Jews.

Simon, there, is called governor. Flavius Josephus gives him the title *ethnarch*, both of which exactly correspond to the Hebrew *nasi*.

The amphora is also a symbol related to the following passage of the panegyric to Simon in the First Book of the Maccabees: "He beautified the sanctuary and multiplied the vessels of the temple."



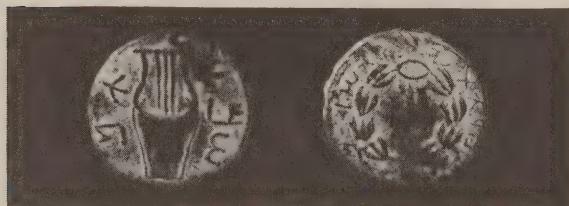
*Wirgin  
Collection*

Prototype III—*Second brass.*

*Obverse:* Palm-tree. Legend "Simon Nasi of Israel."

*Reverse:* Five-lobed vine leaf. Legend "First year of the redemption of Israel."

Here, too, the inscription is closely connected with the events described in the Book of the Maccabees and recapitulated above. The design recalls the peace of Solomon, which was reinstituted by Simon, as described in the panegyric, when "everybody sat under his vine and his fig tree and there was none to fray them."



*Wirgin  
Collection*

Prototype IV—*Third brass.*

*Obverse:* Three-stringed lyre. Legend "Simon."

*Reverse:* Palm-branch within a wreath. Legend "Deliverance of Jerusalem."

This coin illustrates the following passage in the First Book of the Maccabees:

They of the tower in Jerusalem . . . cried to Simon beseeching him to be at one with them . . . and when he put them out from thence, he cleansed the tower from pollutions and entered into it the three and twentieth day of the second month in the hundred and seventy and first year with thanksgiving and branches of palm trees and with harps and cymbals and with viols and hymns and songs, because there was destroyed a great enemy out of Israel. He ordered also that that day should be kept every year with gladness.

This is what the artist has expressed in his coin: the name of Simon without his title, as given in the passage quoted above, the wreath as a symbol of victory, the palm branch and, lastly, the lyre as symbolizations of festivity and music.

Wirgin  
Collection

Prototype V—Denar.

Obverse: Two trumpets. Legend "Deliverance of Jerusalem."

Reverse: Bunch of grapes. Legend "Simon."



An impressive passage in the letter of Antiochos VII, King of Syria, to Simon reads as follows: "As concerning Jerusalem and the sanctuary let them be free." The design embraces the full contents of this sentence: the trumpets of freedom with the legend "Deliverance of Jerusalem," the bunch of grapes taken from the golden vine which was posted in the Temple to symbolize the sanctuary.

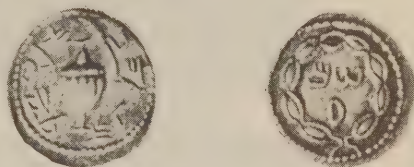
Note: The flan of this specimen and the reverse die are identical with the denar described in the case history on Plate XVII.

Reifenberg Collection

Prototype VI—Denar.

Obverse: Jug with one handle; on right, palm-branch. Legend "Eleazar the Priest."

Reverse: Within a wreath, inscription "Schmah."

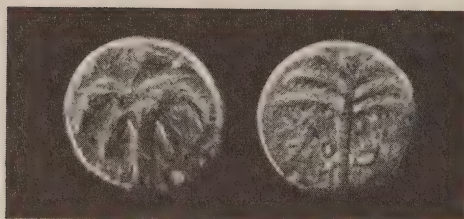


Eleazar does not relate to any historical figure who issued coins. The Eleazar in question is Eleazar the Priest, son of Aaron, mentioned frequently in the Old Testament with exactly the same spelling in Hebrew. This is the same Eleazar whom the priests, especially the Sadducees, considered their Biblical ancestor:

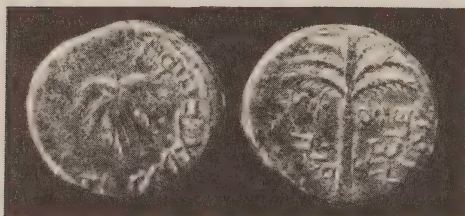
The posterity of Zadok performed priestly services in the Temple from the time of Solomon. . . . The Chronicler in his genealogy traces back the house of Zadok to Eleazar, the elder son of Aaron, thus giving us to understand, that the Zadokites had, if not the only, still the first and nearest claim to the priesthood (1. Chronicle XXIV, 1-31). This procedure of the Chronicler at the same time proves that the name of the ancestor of this race was still vividly remembered in his time and therefore in the Greek period also.

The jug represents a sacrificial vessel of the priests and is entirely different from the storage jar of prototype II. The palm branch, likewise, symbolizes the sacred duties of the priests. Lastly, the word *schmah* indicates passages from the Bible to be recited by the priests in the daily religious services, as described in the *Mishnah*:

The priests descended into the Hall of Hewn Stones to recite the Schmah. The official said to them: Recite the one benediction! Which they did, then they recited the ten commandments, then the passage of "Schmah."



Undated



Dated "Year 1"



Dated "Year 1"



Dated "Year 2"

*Wirgin Collection*

The commonly accepted theory about the so-called Bar Kochba issues is founded on the assumption of the three years' dating of the series. To disprove this theory we present the coins in the following order.

The coins with vine leaf and palm tree come in three kinds of dating. An important detail is the shape of the vine leaf, which only on certain types is five-lobed, on others only three-lobed. Since the coin from the first year has both types of vine leaf, it must be assumed, from the viewpoint of the above theory, that the change in design occurred during the first year.

Now we have the second-year issue with a three-lobed leaf and the third-year issue (actually undated) with the five-lobed leaf. The most logical way is to arrange the coins as we have done here, which means that the coinage actually started with an undated coin and then followed the types of the first year.

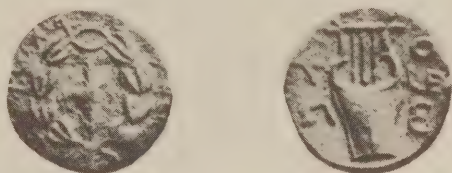
We have a similar situation with respect to the prototypes Nos. II and IV. Logically we must put No. IV at the beginning of the



display, which means again that minting started with an undated coin. The third specimen on the display, a conglomeration of the prototypes, cannot be placed otherwise than at the end of the series.

The conclusion which we draw from this comparison of types is that *before* Bar Kochba could have issued—if he ever did—coins dated with his first year, he would have had to rely on similar but undated coins which were minted earlier. This fact reopens the door as to the time of minting and the identity of the minting authority.

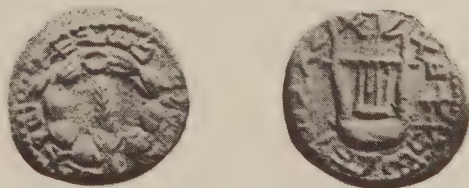
Undated



Dated "Year 1"



Dated "Year 1"



*British Museum Collection*



## PLATES XXIV—XXV

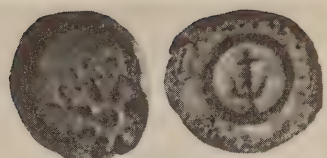
On the facing page we see how coin designs were combined in four different periods:

- 1) Hasmonean before Antigonus
- 2) Antigonus
- 3) Herodian after Antigonus
- 4) Roman procurators

In the first row we have the basic coins during the times of the Hasmonean Dynasty. In the next row we see how Antigonus utilized them. There are the same symbols, the same shape of the heavier bronzes, only the composition is *redone*. We have also the overstruck coin, whose minting origin is unknown. But one thing seems certain, and that is that the overstruck coins gave Herod I the idea of creating a mule-type anchor-cornucopia. Archelaus followed this trend and made the same mule type, adding an anchor and wreath.

As to the organization of the mints, we recall that there were at least two minting places in Jerusalem—one for the High Priest coins and the other for the Alexander coins. A change may have come about when both offices were consolidated as announced by the issue of an overstruck type.

In the fourth period the cycle was completed. Procuratorial coins were made again in the likeness of the Hasmonean pattern, while anchor leptons (widow's mites) were issued again separately.



HASMONEAN

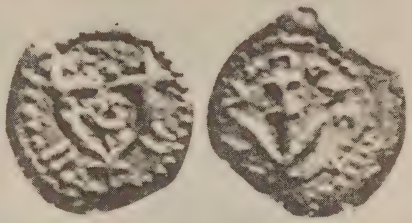
HASMONEAN



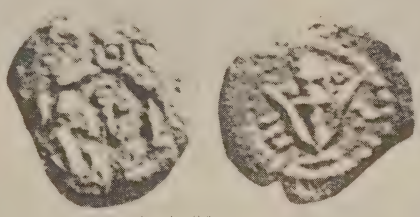
ANTIGONUS



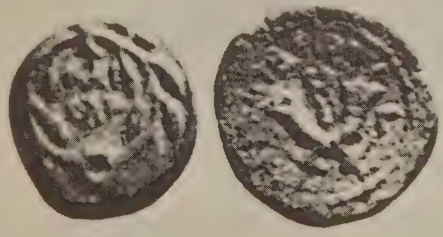
ANTIGONUS



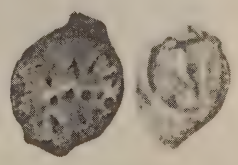
HEROD



ARCHELAUS



PROCURATOR



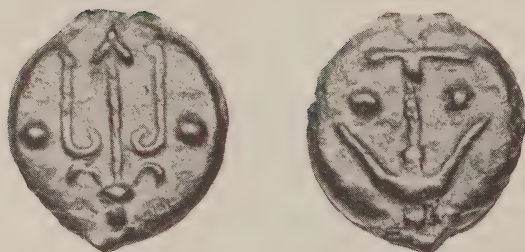
PROCURATOR

## PLATES XXVI—XXVII

In the coins pictured here we may find proof that the early and later Jewish coinages were influenced by that of Italy. Specifically by one type of the *Aes Grave* series issued sometime in the third century B.C.

The similarity of the Jewish bronzes with anchor and sun-wheel to an Italic coin is quite clear (see Plate VI). As far as the first silver shekel is concerned, the arrangement of the pictorial material is the same as on *Aes Grave*.

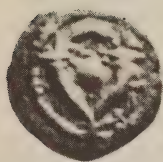
What we see on these *Aes Grave* coins are exclusively fertility symbols, which we find more or less exactly repeated on many Jewish coins.



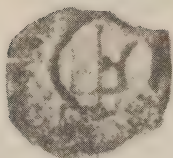
*Aes Grave* from Italy, about 300 B.C. (Haeberlin pl. 68, 1.)



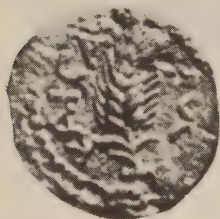
First Jewish silver shekel.



Hasmonean bronze coin.



Jewish Alexander lepton,  
early type.



Procuratorial bronze coin  
from the time of Emperor  
Augustus.



Bronze coin of Herod Arche-  
laus.



Bronze coins from the time of Procurator Pontius Pilatus.

# PLATES XXVIII—XXIX

FERTILITY SYMBOLS ABOVE THE TEMPLE PILLARS (see page 162)



1

Cross with shape as the letter *tav*.



2

Magic cross made of four dots.



3

Star. This star is commonly found on other coins also but without the surrounding ornaments.



4

Wavy line, representing water (cf. page 205, note).





5

Cross. Compare with cross on No. 1 (coin of Herod I).



6

Magic cross. Compare with magic cross on No. 2 (Zion bronze).



7

Star. Compare with star on No. 3 (coin of Herod I).



8

Cross. Compare with cross on No. 1 (ossuary found at Jerusalem, in grave from early first century C.E.—*Life*, Dec. 22, 1947).



9

Magic cross. Compare with magic cross on No. 2 (clay lamp). (*Israel Exploration Journal*, vol. I, Plate 24.)



10

Wavy lines. Compare with wavy lines on No. 4 (clay lamp). (Same source.)

"The zigzag line, so much used in Romanesque architecture, is less certainly an instance of the retention of something purely formal, for it is the primordial symbol of water, and even in Romanesque ornament was used over church doorways in a manner suggesting that the flow of divine grace—which was the symbolic meaning of water in antiquity—was still felt as operative through the symbol by those who entered under it to worship in the churches." (E. R. Goodenough, in *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman World*, vol. 4, page 36.)

1-5, 7—British Museum Collection

6—Wirgin Collection

PLATE XXX



Bronze coin from Pergamum from the time of Domitian, Trajan and Hadrian. (British Museum Catalogue, vol. "Mysia," Plate XXVIII, 4.)



Bronze coin from Anazarbus in Cilicia from the time of Valerian, 253/4 c.e. (British Museum Catalogue, vol. "Cilicia," p. 40, No. 44, also Plate VII, 3.)

*British Museum Collection*

See the Appendix Section "Numismatic Detective Work or The Identification of the Temple Laver."

Simply looking at the bronze coin inscribed "Redemption of Zion," some people have been led to believe currently that the pictorial object is a very large drinking cup of table-use size. This belief, however, is based on an optical illusion encouraged by the absence of a background point of reference. But the true size of the vessel can be seen on the Anazarbus coin, where it reaches the waist of a man. The object on the "Redemption of Zion" bronze, too, is a basin.

Similarly, the *menorah* on the bronze coin struck by Antigonus Mattathias would seem to be of table size were it not for the more detailed perspective given on the frieze of the Arch of Titus in Rome that allows us to learn its true size.

The whole story is described fully in the Appendix titled "Numismatic Detective Work."



Bronze coin of Anazarbus  
(same as on Plate XXX).



Bronze inscribed "Redemption of Zion."

*British Museum Collection*

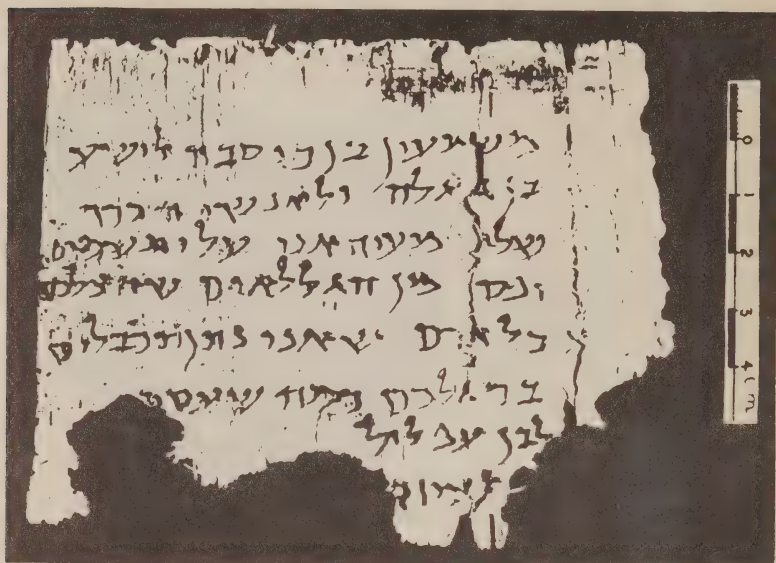


Frieze on Arch of Titus in Rome.



Bronze coin struck  
by Antigonus Mattathias.

## A Letter Attributed to Simon Bar Kochba (See Appendix F)



The original letter.

1. משמעון בן כוסבה לישע  
2. בן בלגלה ולאנשי חכר.  
3. שלתם! מפיד אני עלי חשמים.  
4. וספין מן הגללים שאכלם —  
5. כל אדם, שאני נתן חכבלים  
6. ברגלכם, כמה שפסיר[ין]  
7. לבן עסליל  
8. [ש]מעון בן כוסבה נשיא ישראל

(Transliteration)

1. From Šim'ôn the son of Kôś(i)bâ to  
Yēs(û)â<sup>c</sup>  
2. the son of Ga/i[l]g(ô)lâ and to the men  
of the stronghold,  
3. Peace! I do call Heaven to witness against  
me,  
4. and with the exception of the Galileans  
that (are) with you—  
5. every body, that I shall put irons  
6. on your feet,<sup>so</sup> as I have do[ne]  
7. to the son of 'Aslil  
8. [Ši]m'ôn the so[n of Kôśibâ, prince of  
Yisrâ'êl]

(Translation)

Note: Bracketed portions are not in the original letter.



the Jewish *Job* written a thousand years later is undeniable. Though the basic theme is the same, technically the Sumerian essay is a very brief story while the Jewish work is a long philosophical poem. They differ in artistic and philosophical depth, but each remains a distinguished document and a tribute to the creative minds of the ancient people who conceived these works. What they do illustrate are the many cultural meeting grounds of the ancients.

The Old Testament abounds with the itineraries of the Patriarchs and their people, who moved throughout a range of ancient countries, encountering the tyrannies and customs of such kings as Pharaoh, Abimelech and others. Everywhere there were traces of the older Sumerian civilization and that of the Canaanites, who were among the earliest inhabitants of what became known as Palestine, and similar conventions were to be found among the neighboring Assyrians, Babylonians, Hittites, Hurrians, Arameans, Egyptians and Phoenicians. The Biblical paradise, the curse of Eve that she conceive and bear children in sorrow, and other motifs were part of the old-world tapestry. Even such minor details as the blood plague visited upon Egypt during Moses' time finds a parallel in Sumerian literature. The goddess Inanna, a sister-under-the-skin of the later Greek Aphrodite, weary from a long journey between heaven and earth, was said to have rested near the mortal gardener Shukallituda's place. The gardener took ungentlemanly advantage of the situation, and the goddess on awakening flew into a towering fury and determined to find the culprit by visiting plagues on the people. A Sumerian scribe, who may have thought the punishment disproportionate to the crime, wrote:

Then, the woman, because of her pudendum, what harm she did! Inanna, because of her pudendum, what did she do!



All the wells of the land she filled with blood. . . . "I must find him who copulated with me among all the lands," she said.\*

Not only is the plague identical but also the earthiness of the observation and expression of Biblical accounts that is translated into various symbols that found their way onto coins.

Shortly before Joshua died, he told the assembled tribes of Israel:

Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel: Your fathers dwelt of old time beyond the River [Euphrates] even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor; and they served other gods.

Then follows a list of victories over the Amorites, Moabites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Gergashites, Hivites and the Jebusites. Finally, Joshua put a choice to the people:

Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve Him in sincerity and in truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served . . . or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; but for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. (Joshua, 24:1-24.)

After the Jews decided to support Joshua, he firmly stated, "Now therefore put away the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the Lord, the God of Israel."

The temptation to adopt the religious symbols and practices of the people with whom the Jews came into contact must have been strong. Indeed, it took the utmost persuasive

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\* S. N. Kramer, *From the Tablets of Sumer*, p. 69.

power of such leaders as Moses, Joshua, the prophets and the Maccabees to prevent heathenism from engulfing their people.

Though Abraham the Patriarch broke with the religions of Chaldea, he and his close descendants used symbols and forms of worship common in Canaan and Phoenicia by the kind of altars and pillars which they erected. Jacob, too, made use of the pillar symbols, and Jephta the judge sacrificed his daughter at Mizpeh, as was sometimes practiced among the Phoenicians. Jephta's daughter has been called the Iphigenia of the Book of Judges because her fate resembles that of the Greek King Agamemnon's daughter.

Hezekiah, a king of Judah in the seventh century B.C., took a firm hand in trying to suppress the veneration of foreign deities, idols and symbols. He did away with Dionysiac statues and the conelike *omphalus*, or navel, emblem of the mother goddess Venus-Ashtoreth. Mounds, altars and pillars were removed and the brass serpent to which incense was burned in line with the popular serpent worship of antiquity was destroyed by Hezekiah.

Following in his footsteps, Josiah took even more drastic measures. Chapter Twenty-three of the Second Book of Kings gives an ample inventory of the foreign religious elements which had made powerful inroads into the lives of Jews at the time. For us this inventory is of interest because some of the symbols associated with the worship and the representations of the gods which Josiah eliminated turn up in various forms on later Jewish coins. Most prominently mentioned are the emblems used in the worship of the sun, moon and stars; images of the god Baal and his sex-suggestive pillars; the statues of Moloch, Venus and Adonis; the *kadeshim*, or consecrated men and female prostitutes made popular in



FIGURE 18

Tree encircled by serpent—a fertility symbol especially popular in ancient Tyre.

Babylon and India, who lived in the cloisters of the Temple; the household gods called *teraphim*; and various foreign altars set up in the Temple court.

Even then the various prophets had continually to preach and warn the people against the tempting use of foreign rites, worship and symbols. The prophet Jeremiah was outraged at the practices committed in the valley of the Gen Hinnom that lay southwest of Jerusalem, where according to some historians cultic prostitution may have been performed and child sacrifices to Moloch certainly were practiced. Said Jeremiah:

For a long time you broke your yoke,  
 You snapped your fetters.  
 And you said, "I will not serve thee [idols]."  
 But upon every high hill,  
 And under every green tree,  
 You bow down and commit fornication. (2:20.)

He likened the people of Judah to a paramour seeking an illicit love as they stray from their own God. Further he scorned their imitations of the Canaanites' worship of the paternal and maternal spirits that were supposed to have resided in

trees and stones. Jeremiah poured ridicule on those who would say of a tree, "Thou art my father," and those who would say of a stone, "Thou didst bear me."

Through the centuries this attraction to paganism persisted and may even have been intensified during the Babylonian exile, despite the hard core of religionists who adamantly adhered to Mosaic teachings. The immense love of the prophets for their people led them to scourge with words and persuade with warnings to bring the deserters back to the spiritual fold.

The small province of Judea could not remain isolated from the cities surrounding it. Over the years these cities had become Hellenized, and Jewish contact with them through the absolutely essential channels of commerce required the use of the Greek language, which in those days had become as universal as English is today. With the acceptance of the language also came noticeable acceptance of many Greek customs and phases of Greek culture. With the beginning of the second century B.C., the younger generation, the well-educated and the upper classes came more than halfway to meet Greek culture and were not averse to the pagan projects of the Syrian King Antiochus. "Had this process been allowed to go on in its natural and peaceful course," notes the historian Emil Schuerer, "then the Judaism of Palestine would probably have in time assumed a form in which it would be scarcely recognisable. . . . Everything seemed conspiring to present before Hellenism an open door."

The Hellenistic sympathizers among the Jews far outnumbered the "party of the pious," who would have been reduced to the status of a secular sect adhering strictly to the letter of the Jewish laws if it were not for the high-handed actions of Antiochus. Throughout Jewish history despotic attempts to stamp out Judaism have had the opposite of the

desired effect. The greater the tyrannic pressures, the greater became the resistance. But in relatively peaceful periods, as in pre-Maccabean times, the pull toward cultural assimilation proved strong.

As it happened, Antiochus Epiphanes IV was a man completely dominated by whim, and when Rome interfered with his military designs on Egypt in 168 B.C., he channeled his frustration into a project that called for the extermination of the Jewish religion, if not the people themselves. This monumental whim resulted in the looting of the Temple, torture of the population which refused to worship at Antiochus' portable heathen altars, and edicts abolishing Jewish customs. The story of the revolt that broke out under the leadership of the aged priest Mattathias and his five sons is oft told and only a few pertinent points need concern us here.

Mattathias' son Judah, known for his warrior exploits, capitalized on several brilliant victories to defeat decisively the Syrians. It was not until some twenty years later, under the leadership of his brother Simon, that the last Syrian garrisons were evacuated from the country. But enough independence and security had been achieved to allow for a Temple rededication and purification in December, 165 B.C.—festivities that lasted for eight days and that became the fixed yearly observance of Hanukkah.

Later scribes and commentaries added the story of a miraculous cruse of oil that enabled the lights to burn for eight days and added interpretations that steer far away from the original situation. As we have seen, Hellenization had saturated a large segment of the Jewish population, and it was not likely that the influence evaporated overnight. The fact that vestiges of paganism—altars and ornaments—had to be cleared out of the Temple, as part of the rededication, indicates the measure of their existence. However, the “festival of Hanuk-



kah manifests an influence of the worship of Dionysus on Judaism *only in so far as the latter found it necessary to suppress that influence by supplanting [it]*, and this is proof of the vitality of Judaism.” \* O. S. Rankin, who comes to this conclusion, impressively shows to what degree Dionysiac and other pagan rites were reformed and transformed.†

This is but one of the numerous instances in Jewish history of a transitional period in the use of symbolism or the overlaying of old symbols with new meanings. How far the transformation succeeded in veiling pagan symbols can only be conjectural. We might say, though, that the original meanings of the symbols and their sources were no secret to the people for a long time after the transformation, especially since continued contact with other civilizations, which kept the symbols alive in their original form, is self-evident. It was only with the passage of centuries and through the reinterpretations by scriptural commentators that the origin of these symbols became shrouded.

One distinction should be made, however, between the same symbol as it was used before and after a period of transformation. Before, there was a good deal of veneration and religious significance attached to the symbol; after, only cultural recognition was given it. This explains the abundance of held-over pagan symbols on ancient Jewish coins and, more important, it explains why they were acceptable. Once their religious meaning was reoriented, they passed from the idolatrous and venerative stage to the cultural.

The symbols and festivals that survived the transformations seem to prove that it was impossible to break completely the hold of the assortment of popular customs that had grown

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\* Italics are ours.

† *The Origins of the Festival of Hanukkah*, p. 123.

up. Considering the social life of the Palestinians and their historic relations with neighbors, it is easy to understand the predominance of fertility symbols, some of which by nature are more phallic than others. Before we discuss their appearance on the ancient Jewish coins, we should look into some vital social and psychological factors.

Through "the door of the nations," as Ezekiel called the thriving city of Jerusalem, all sort of trade, from everyday necessities to oriental luxuries, was carried on in profusion. But outside of Jerusalem and the smaller cities, life was concentrated in tiny, dispersed villages. The Jewish population was estimated at about three million and for the most part consisted of farmers, who bred cattle, tended vineyards, olive groves, fruit orchards, grain fields, and raised a variety of crops. Since good soil was the exception and water supply was scanty, their work was hard. Crude farming implements, the threat of hot desert winds, clouds of voracious locusts, and the specter of drought forced them to labor in the sweat of their brows. Right after the October and November rains they would sow, and in the middle of April harvesting would begin, giving rise to the agricultural celebration of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles.

It was precisely in agricultural societies that we find the origin and perpetuation of basic myths and symbols, accounting also for the strong similarity of their objects of worship and festivals. Unable to deal with abstract ideas, the untutored man translated everything into the visible. Hodder M. Westropp and C. Staniland Wake aptly summarize this attitude:

Nature to the early man was not a brute matter, but a being invested with his own personality, and endowed with the same feelings, passions, and performing the same actions. He could only conceive the course of nature from the

analogy to his own actions. Generation, begetting—production, bringing forth—were thus his idea of cause and effect. The earth was looked upon as the mould of nature, as the recipient of seeds, the nurse of what was produced in its bosom; the sky was the fecundating and fertilizing power. An analogy was suggested in the union of the male and female. These comparisons are found in ancient writers. (*Ancient Symbol Worship*.)

These writers or myth-makers saw the sky as a father casting seeds and the earth as a mother receiving them. The rain of the heavens and the produce of the earth gave proof of a fertile union.

On the basis of a searching study of early religions, Westropp and Wake find that the active and the passive, the male and the female, are recognized and represented as reciprocal elements:

Hence the almost universal reverence paid to the images of the sexual parts, as they were regarded as symbols and types of the generative and productive principles of nature. . . . The Phallus and the Cteis, the Lingam and the Yoni—the special parts contributing to generation and production, becoming thus symbols of those active and passive causes, could not but become objects of reverence and worship. The union of the two symbolized the creative energy of all nature; for almost all primitive religion consisted in the reverence and worship paid to nature and its operations.

Evidence of phallic worship or representation cuts across historic time and continents from the ancient Assyrians to the New World Peruvians, and phallic amulets are still common in contemporary peasant societies. Even the Jews did not remain unaffected by these practices of ancient neighbors, and Ezekiel tells us that their women made phalli of gold and silver. Indicative of the solemn attitude toward the phallus and

the generative organs is Abraham's request that his servant take an oath by placing his hand "under his thigh" and a similar request, recorded in the Old Testament, by Jacob of his son Joseph—an oath practice still used in some parts of the world today.

How this personalized interpretation of nature was expressed in specific symbolic forms is described by Thomas Inman:

All conceivable attributes of man and woman were symbolized. . . . Everything in creation that resembled in any way the presumed Creator, whether in name, in character, or in shape, was supposed to represent the deity. Hence a palm tree was a religious emblem, because it is long, erect, and round; an oak because it is hard and firm; a fig-tree, because its leaves resemble the male triad. The ivy was sacred from a similar cause. A myrtle was also a type, but of the female, because its leaf is a close representation of the *vesica piscis*. Everything, indeed, which in any way resembles the characteristic organs of man and woman, became symbolic of one or the other deity. . . . (*Ancient Pagan and Modern Christian Symbolism*.)

Just as it was possible to make distinctions between male and female on the basis of physical characteristics, objects were given like or similar attributes. We find that a sword, spear,



FIGURE 19

Male pillar and female half-moon composite used in ancient architecture.

arrow, dart, a ship's prow, or, for that matter, anything that was longer than it was broad and intended to pierce became emblematic of the male; at the same time a vine leaf, a door, hole, a sheath, target or anything that was cavernous, circular, oval-shaped was considered female. Etymology too bears out



FIGURE 20

A trident employing male and female symbols.

the basic idea of distinguishing by sex.\* One example in particular will suffice. In Hebrew the male is called a *zachar*—a “perforator,” or “digger,” while the female is called *nekebah*—a “hole,” or “trench.”

Now, objections have been raised to the effect that these objects are nothing more than what they appear to be in life and that they represent only themselves. It is true that an object may be nothing more than an object *per se*; but then it must be noted that the object is *not a symbol*, it is a pure and simple sign. A symbol can assume the name *only if it is a partial representation of an object or if it stands for something other than itself*.

A snake or serpent, in itself, is a specific type of animal, nothing more and nothing less. But when it is placed in the Garden of Eden it becomes a symbol and part of an allegory. But why choose a snake in the first place to act as a seducer or tempter of Eve? The changeable shape of the snake, from

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\* See note on page 182.



the pendular to the erect, its fecundity, its shedding of skin to renew itself—all these characteristics lent themselves to comparison with the male organ, the idea of fertility, and the notion of immortality, or the perpetuation of life. As a result,



FIGURE 21

The tree and serpent appear in such diverse cultures as the Hebrew, Greek, Indian, and Central American.

the worship of the serpent as a symbol of life was common in the ancient world; even the Jews fashioned a serpent of brass during their exodus from Egypt, and today there are numerous cults in the Far East whose religious rituals center around this image. Therefore, when we see such symbols as the snake or serpent on ancient coins or works of art, we must attribute to them greater meaning than we are accustomed to.

Concern for fertility in nature and in man is evident in almost every ancient mythology, religion, rituals and writings. Genesis shows that the greatest blessing is fertility and the multiplication of the race through procreation. Barrenness was thought a curse, eloquently expressed by Rachel,

who cried out, "Give me children or I die," while marriage and sex were invested with the sanctity of divine commandment. In other civilizations, measures to insure fertility went so far as to make the phallus an object of reverence and worship. Women particularly joined in this worship because among many peoples the esteem for women was proportional to their number of offspring. But the degree to which the phallus was used as a symbol depended on the stage of a civilization's social development. At the primitive stage, it was the center of religious worship; at a more progressive stage, it was used as an amulet to ward off evil influences, or it was regarded as a general fertility symbol acceptable on coins and in art; and finally, in sophisticated or decadent stages, the phallus was no longer a primary religious symbol but one that presided at socially unbridled festivities. Vestiges of such phallic celebrations that were popular during the first of May in ancient India and Britain, notably the use of the Maypole, are still alive in those countries and other modern-day regions.

"Sex worship," says the historian James Bonwick, "is as ancient as star worship." And he adds:

Such phallicism was the exponent of the principle of renewal and reproduction. It was the most natural form of expressing the idea of creation, and the dependence of man upon Providence. The ancient Egyptians, however, had such nice notions of propriety as to confine it to the masculine development. Symbolism of a purely feminine nature became the expression of a more cultured but less virtuous community. Circumcision . . . may be accepted as a rite of sex worship. Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos*, speaking of the neighboring nations as far as India, says: "Many of them prac-

tice divination, and devote their genitals to their divinities." \*

Circumcision among primitive people is a community rite practiced primarily at seasonal festivals and symbolizes the renewal of the life force. The Egyptians, Ethiopians, Colchians, and others imparted magical and physical significance to this act as insuring the perpetuation of the species and its propagation. Etymology tells us about the importance attached to the rite. In Egyptian hieroglyphics the sign for phallus shows it circumcised; the Hebrew word for "bridegroom," *hatan*, derives from the verb "circumcise"; in India the ceremony is called a "wedding"; and Arabs describe it as "purification."

The rite also fits our understanding of the symbolic act, namely the offering of a part to signify the whole. Circumcision filled the same purpose as did the offering of firstlings or first crops and fruits to the Deity that was universal in agricultural communities. Whether the physical or hygienic value entered into the picture or not, is a question that is completely overshadowed by the symbolic value assigned to it. The ancient Jews saw it as a covenant between the Lord and themselves sealed by the blood of Abraham that came from

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\* Bonwick also shows how far the Egyptians adapted the idea of the reciprocal elements, the active male and the passive female, which we discussed earlier, in the construction of their monuments, throwing an interesting light on the symbolism of the pyramids: "The pyramid in its quadrilateral base and triangular sides illustrated the union of active spiritual agency on the inert passive femininity of matter. The obelisk in its union of four equilateral triangles meant the same thing." He further indicates that loaves in the form of phalli, called *taenhannu*, were placed as offerings. The phallus was also pictured on coffins and tombs, indicating its conspicuous role in Egyptian theology. (*Egyptian Belief and Modern Thought*.)

his life source. As we read in Genesis: "This is my covenant which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee: Every male among you shall be circumcised . . . in the flesh of the foreskin." Among the spurs to rebellion against Antiochus was his edict that would have abolished circumcision, and in the light of the historical and religious importance which the Jews attached to the subject their reaction is easily understood.

In addition to the first offering of fruit and harvests, the practice of animal sacrifice persisted as long as the existence of the Temple at Jerusalem itself. The altars, implements and rituals used in these sacrifices find point for point parallels, by name and custom, among the ancient neighbors of the Jews. On the one hand, the Old Testament prescribed a complex ritualistic system that was designed to distinguish it from others; for example, it was mandatory to burn the entrails of the animals to prevent the priest from using them as a means for divination or soothsaying, as it was customary particularly among the Greeks. On the other hand, there was retained the practice of dedicating special sacrificial parts such as the thigh, a euphemism for the male organ. Sacrifice had become a transformed act of devotion. As Royden Keith Yerkes explains it,

Living devotion of this kind had become the natural obverse of the uncompromising monotheism which was . . . the fanatical glory of Judaism. It required little imagination to symbolize all this by giving to . . . [God] the whole of a sacrificed victim and keeping none for oneself. Thus was laid the foundation of the cultic expression of complete surrender or giving of oneself to the deity.\*

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\* Royden Keith Yerkes, *Sacrifice in Greek and Roman Religions and Early Judaism*. New York, 1952, p. 145.

Yerkes further notes that to the ancient Jews religion required "the activity of a group whose solidarity depended upon its cult. The importance of the individual arose from the fact that he was a member of the house of Israel and therefore a contributor to the status of that house." Wherever cultic symbols exist, they have a significance that is not accidental but purposeful. One of the problems faced by ancient religionists was the tempering and modification of pagan sensuality that appealed to the natural physical instincts of the people. As far as it was possible, these were sublimated in festivities and practically eliminated from such practices as sacrifice. But the symbols themselves persisted, though stripped of venerative meaning.

The power and popular understanding of those symbols in their ancient earthy terms is lost to us because the devotional system of sacrifice has been supplanted by a system of devotional prayer in which symbolism has become veiled. However, liturgy since ancient times has retained the overtones of sensual language and symbolism.

"The great symbols of the life urge," concludes Erwin R. Goodenough, "are by nature of three basic kinds: they are the symbols of hunting or fighting, the symbol of food and eating (or of the sources of food—the winds, rain, the sun, etc.), and the symbol of sex." This seems to us an artificial separation of symbols, especially when applied to ancient man or to some contemporary primitive societies. How can we make such hard and fast classifications when we know, for example, that in many agricultural societies it was customary for males deliberately to abstain from sexual activity before going hunting or warring for fear that potency might be endangered and when it was their knowing attempt to divest their prey, animal or man, of their life potency through the kill. We have



also seen how closely linked are the activities of food-gathering and fertility rituals, expressed through sex, that were designated to propitiate the elements of nature. It seems to us that Goodenough's last classification is the basic and inclusive category. Since most ancient societies were patriarchal, it comes as no surprise that, dictated by male conceit or notions of male importance, the fertility symbols should be so predominantly phallic.

In ancient Jewish coinage the Biblical injunction against graven images was strictly observed so that on coins minted in Jerusalem no human or animal types appear that violated the Scriptures. It was the aim of the scribes to prevent worldly objects from being invested with divine attributes and worshipped accordingly, and further to prevent an idol or real image from replacing the Deity. All this, however, does not eliminate the use of foreign motifs and symbols on the coins.\* It was only when Rome tried to *impose* its objects of worship that the Jews rose to a pitch of anger that seemed incomprehensible to the Romans. One of the unique contributions of the Jews to the ethics of religion was their view that man-made objects, whether utilitarian or artistic, are means or instruments in serving God but not the end in themselves. Herein lies the difference between idolatry and symbolic worship, which helps to explain the acceptability of "pagan" in-

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\* Erwin R. Goodenough in his thorough survey of *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, volume IV, page 3, makes this comment: "Jews used pagan symbols long before they had distinctively Jewish ones, and even after they had a symbolic vocabulary of their own, the pagan motifs remained so important that they were commonly used alongside of, or, as earlier, in place, of symbols that were idiomatically Jewish."

fluences on coin symbols. They were in no way construed as objects of worship but as conventional forms.†

In one of the valuable studies of symbols on ancient Jewish coins, the late Paul Romanoff sees these coins as a closely knit group depicting "the beliefs of the people at that period, and are mainly agricultural symbols connected with the agricultural festivals in the Temple." Though, like other scholars, he acknowledges similarities between symbols on Jewish coins and those of non-Palestinians, he gives the impression that the Jewish symbols grew up independently. This notion of cultural isolation fails to take into proper account the continued and extensive contacts between the ancient Jews and their neighbors and ignores the significance and effects of the process of adaptation of symbols that we have discussed.

For his analysis of coin symbols, Romanoff and many

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† A distinction seems to be clearly drawn between objects and symbols in common use, including coins, and those used for religious purposes. A vivid parable and commentary may be found in the *Mishnah*, "Abodah Zarah," 3:4. "Proklos the philosopher asked Rabban Gamaliel in Acre, while he was bathing in the Bath of Aphrodite, and said to him: 'It is written in your Law, "And there shall cleave naught of the devoted thing to thine hand." Why then dost thou bathe in the Bath of Aphrodite?' He answered, 'One may not answer in the bath.' [It is forbidden to speak words of the Law while naked.] And when he came out he said, 'I came not within her limits, she came within mine! They do not say, "Let us make a bath for Aphrodite," but, "Let us make an Aphrodite as an adornment for the bath." Moreover, if they would give thee much money thou wouldest not enter in before thy goddess naked or after suffering pollution, nor wouldest thou make water before her! Yet this goddess stands at the mouth of the gutter and all the people make water before her!'

"It is written, *Their gods* (Deut. 12:3), only; thus what is treated as a god is forbidden, but what is not treated as a god is permitted."

other numismatists lean heavily on Jewish commentators who lived at a much later period than when the coins originated. It was the aim of these commentators to give purely Jewish significance to the coin symbols and wipe out the traces of "paganism." Their motivation was religious and their method was to reinterpret the symbols so as to give them a more acceptable meaning, bringing them closer to the stern ideals of their teachings.

Romanoff does agree that the symbols on ancient Jewish coins are almost exclusively related to the idea of fertility. This we intend to carry a step further by indicating the common fund of symbols in the ancient world from which the Jews drew and which they adapted to their own needs. At one historic point where the cultural contact and the similarity of symbols is beyond doubt, Romanoff cannot help but observe that the "Maccabees fighting for religious freedom and national independence adopted foreign symbols and Judaized them by eliminating the types \* found on non-Jewish coins foreign to the Jewish spirit and accepting only the symbols that accompanied these types."

In view of such borrowing of foreign fertility symbols that were mainly phallic, it seems either naïve or wishful to think that their basic meaning was not obvious to the ancient Jews.

Mostly we find these symbols on the Jewish coins: palm tree, palm branch, *lulab*, *ethrog*, vine and grapes, grape leaf, pomegranate, lily, cornucopia, laurel wreath, wreath with olives; Temple, ark; *menorah*, star; *amphora*, *ampulla*, laver, trumpet, anchor and lyre.

On the walls of King Solomon's Temple were *palm trees* which had been carved out on the interior and exterior of the

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\* In numismatic language "type" means "symbol."

building. If there is doubt that the palm tree was a symbol of life and the phallus in the ancient East, we need only point to the pairs of cherubim "intertwined like husband and wife" near the palm trees on the Temple walls to realize that the symbolism was plain to Solomon. Not only does the stately, uniformly thick and tall palm tree lend itself as a symbol, but also its fruit, providing food for a considerable population in the ancient world, merited its life-giving attributes.

In Hebrew the tree is called *tamar*, and we know of a Canaanite city Baal-Tamar, which took its name from the Baal \* worship practiced there and centered around a priapic palm tree. Now, some scholars see no connection between these phallic palm trees and the ones appearing on Jewish coins. Romanoff, for example, says that this tree "became the symbol of Judea, where palm trees grow in greater number than in any other parts of Palestine." Against this implication that the palm tree is a "home-grown" symbol, we have two unmistakable bits of evidence to show that it was imported. In the first place, King Solomon commissioned Hiram from the country of Tyre to do the carvings on the Temple. In addition to "transplanting" the palm tree as a symbol from popular Baal worship, Hiram also set up for good measure two phallic pillars, *Jachin* and *Boaz*, in front of the Temple and used other known symbols in the worship of Astarte, Chemosh, and Milcom.

Then there is a second clinching point. On those coins of the national Jewish coinage where the palm tree appears, *it is always shown with seven branches*. This in itself would mean very little if it were not for the fact that the Assyrian fertility symbol, the palm tree, which predates the Jewish symbol, is

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\* The god Baal is also known as "The Procreator" and "Lord of the Palm."



FIGURE 22

Palm tree with branches on a Jewish coin. (See also Figure 12.)

also *always* shown with seven branches. Here is no incidental parallel; it is part of the process of adoption and adaptation in which, to some extent, the basic meaning of the symbol was also understood by the ancient Jews.

The palm tree was a fairly common symbol among the ancients. "Phoenicia" means the "land of the palm trees," and on its coins this symbol is aptly represented. On other ancient coins the palm tree is seen in association with some female symbol so that their relationship is clear. In Egyptian temples, too, were palm-tree representations whose branches were lopped off to make their identity obvious. Some historians speculate that the symbol went from Egypt to Tyre. We have already seen how it was brought from Tyre to become part of Solomon's Temple ornamentations.

One of the earliest religious uses of the *palm branch* is found in Egypt, where the god Thoth is pictured as carrying a palm branch in his hand, while his priests wore it attached to their sandals. In the *Orphic Poems* of the ancient East, the palm tree is admired for its long life and its singular distinction among trees in that it never changes or sheds its leaves.



The Greeks gave it the name *phoenix* and, like the Egyptians, who bestowed it on royalty as an emblem of honor, they called the divinity Bacchus by another name, Ph-anax, the



FIGURE 23

The mystic palm tree of Asher—note the *ethrog*-like fruit—being wantonly celebrated. Fertility symbols, dominated by the horned goat, abound here.

“god of the palm.” It seems to have been universally accepted as “the magic bough” that symbolized immortality, and it appeared frequently on Jewish coins and tombstones. Christianity made this symbol a part of Palm Sunday ceremonies, attesting to the long-standing popularity of the symbol and its adaptability to religious ritual. And, as a symbol of life, peace and victory it has survived until our own time.

The Hebrew word for palm branch is *lulab*; however, as an object used in the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, it specifically refers to a bundle of palm branches with unfolded leaves around whose base are wound shoots of *myrtle* and *willow*. These were used during the ritual of water libation, since the palm branch was said to have the power of attracting water or rain, as all palm trees grow near water. The connection of rain and water with fertility in nature was ex-

pressed in all agricultural celebrations. In the earliest stages, sympathetic magic was exerted to induce rain and fertility, and in later stages, water was associated with birth—Venus rising from the waves, and the water of the womb.

That the *lulab* played an important part in the fertility ceremony is undeniable. It was shaken or waved so that its tip snapped heavenward to pull together clouds and winds from the corners of the earth and then earthward to bring the rains down. Along with the *lulab*, an *ethrog*, or citrus fruit resembling a large lemon, was held in the hand. This *ethrog* also makes its appearance on coins, either single or in pairs, with or without the symbol of the *lulab*.

Various interpretations have been given to the *lulab* and the *ethrog* and their symbolism. Goodenough says, "The long, unopened palm branch with an *ethrog* tied to the base will suggest a symbolism of penis and testicles to some. I can only say they make no such suggestion to me." Such subjective refutations seem out of place in the historic study of symbolism. It is not important in our search for the meaning of ancient symbols to ask what these symbols suggest to us but what associations the ancients suggested by the use of their special symbols.\*

What we are dealing with here is the degree to which a symbol is made to conform with the actual object it is supposed to represent. To illustrate this we might cite one of the numerous examples given in B. Z. Goldberg's study of sexual elements in religion:

In the solemn ceremonies of the Lingayats in India, the high priest holds a lingam [a representation of the male organ] in

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\* On some of the coins the *lulab*'s palm branch (see Figure 12) is surrounded by small pellets that may be taken to mean fruit or seed, strengthening the sexual symbolism. Moreover, Amoraic-Jewish tradition holds that the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden was an *ethrog* tree!



FIGURE 24

Different versions of a basic phallic symbol dating back to the Etruscans and reappearing in western religions.

his left hand, while he worships it in the required sixteen ways. During all this time the disciple stands by, a reverent observer. Then the high priest places the lingam in the left hand of the onlooker, enjoining him to view it intently. "Look at it," he says, "it is the highest thing in existence. Look at it and you will see your own soul." (*The Sacred Fire*, pp. 139-140.)

Here we can observe several things. The deep significance given to the generative male element finds respectful expression in religious ritual. Again, though, it must be emphasized that the attitude toward this symbol varied with time and place, so that in some stages of different civilizations it was either a symbol calling forth veneration (open or hidden) or wanton ribaldry. In the case of the lingam, the symbol is very close to the object it represents, while the *lulab* as a symbol more or less disguises the object.

There are other factors as well that allow interpretation of the *lulab* as a disguised phallic symbol. Besides its shape, fertility function, and the fact that it is a member or branch of the phallic palm tree, it is surrounded by other symbols both during the festival ceremonies and on coins, illustrating the active and the passive elements in fertility rites and concepts. Moreover, if we compare the agricultural festivals of ancient times, especially those of the Greeks, with the festivals of the

Jews we find a startling resemblance both in ritual and in the actual symbols employed. For the Jews there were two points of difference however: their religious orientation was monotheistic, and, unlike others who overtly and prominently displayed the phallus,\* they substituted the *lulab*.

On some of the bronze coins we find *baskets and dates* on each side of a palm tree, while on the obverse of the coins there is an *ethrog* and a *lulab's* palm branch amid fruit.† Since the date, because of its attributes, is considered a female symbol, it forms a fitting complement to the male symbol of the *lulab*. This use of combination symbols was common practice, in addition to the combining of male and female symbols into a single configuration.

The basket which contained First Fruits, *bikkurim*, to be presented at the Temple, beginning with the Jewish Pentecost, strongly resembles the sacred basket carried by young Greek girls called *canephoroi* during Dionysiac festivals

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\* In the Greek ceremonies devoted to Bacchus a group of men called *phalliphoroi* carried long poles terminating in phalli crowned with flowers. In some agricultural societies the ritual phallus was planted in the earth, the female principle, to symbolize a fertile union after the festivities. It was not unusual for participants of the festival to indulge themselves in the fields, blending the sensual and the religious aspects of the celebration.

† Some commentators, like Romanoff, interpret the symbols on the bronze coins as dates falling from the tree into the basket. This strengthens the belief that these symbols were intended to convey the relationship between the male and the female elements. How persistent such fertility symbolism is through the ages may be noted by a modern parallel in a West African community, harboring many Priapean figures, where the Tree of Life, the male symbol, is anointed with *palm* oil so that it drips into a pot (compare the basket) placed below. Women pray before this symbol to implore the god Legba for fertility.

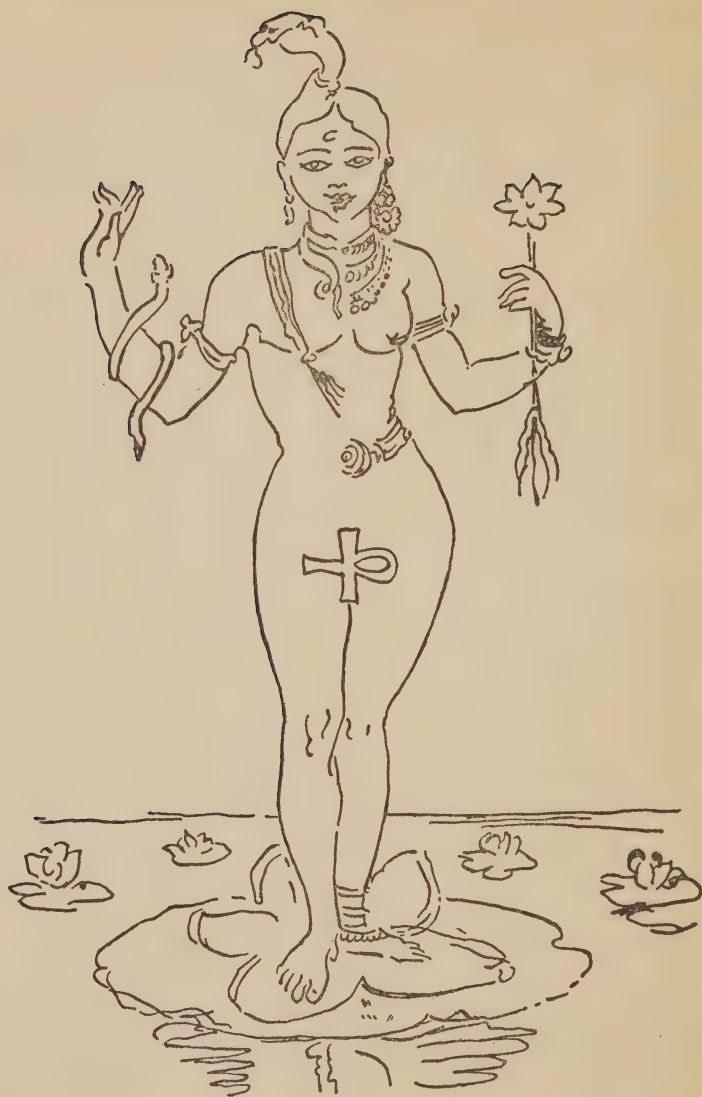


FIGURE 25

A famous example of symbolic composition representing the male and female duality of Brahma. Note the abundance of fertility symbols: the serpent, lotus flower, water.



which were said to have come from the East. These baskets were of gold and contained a variety of fruits, cakes, and a dominant phallus made from the wood of a fig tree. (From the *fig* tree, interestingly enough, popular and universal etymology has derived a name describing sexual union.)

In the Jewish baskets the phallus is transformed into the *lulab's* palm branch, but the other similarities remain intact. The wealthy among the Jews brought their *bikkurim* in silver or gold baskets, like the Greeks. Also the earliest practice of first offerings called for cakes of wheat. Again we have a situation which in our study of symbolism shows more than coincidental relation. This fundamental fact calls for further exploration in order to get at the roots and meaning of the symbols found on the coins.

We have already seen how the Festival of Tabernacles was described by the Jewish commentators in the Mishnah. It will prove valuable to compare their account given on page 137 with that of the Roman historian Plutarch. In re-creating the Jewish celebration, he drew on observations made by older writers who had witnessed parts of the Jewish worship from a foreign vantage point, coming to the understandable but mistaken conclusion that the God of the Jews was identical with Dionysus, or Bacchus, and Iao, or Adonis. Here is Plutarch's description:

The time and manner of the greatest and most holy solemnity of the Jews is exactly agreeable to the holy Orgies of Bacchus, for that which they call the Feast they celebrate in the midst of the vintage, furnishing their tables with all sorts of fruits, while they sit under booths or tabernacles made of vines and ivy; and the day which goes immediately before this, they call the day of Tabernacles. Within a few days afterward they celebrate another feast, not darkly, but

openly, dedicated to Bacchus, for they have a feast among them called *Kradephoria*, from carrying palm branches, and *Thyrso-phoria*, when they enter the temple carrying thyrsi. What they do within, I do not know; but it is very probable that they perform the rites of Bacchus. First, they have little trumpets, such as the Grecians used to have at their Bacchanalia to call upon their gods withal. Others go before them, playing upon harps, whom they call *Levites*—whether so named from *Lusios*, or rather from *Evios*, either word agrees with Bacchus. And I suppose that their Sabbaths have some relation to Bacchus; for even at this day, many call the Bacchi by the name of *Sabbi*, and they make use of that word at the celebration of the orgies of Bacchus. . . . Their high priest, on holidays, enters their temple with his mitre [official headdress] on, arrayed in the skin of a hind [*nebris*], embroidered with gold, wearing buskins, and a coat hanging down to his ankles; besides, he has a great many little bells hanging at his garment which make a noise as he walks the streets.

Plutarch continues his description:

So in the nightly ceremonies of Bacchus, as the fashion is among us [Romans], they also make use of musical instruments, and call the nurses of the god *Chalcodrustae*. High upon the walls of their temple is a representation of the incurved thyrsus and drums, which surely can belong to no other divinity than Bacchus. Moreover, they are forbidden the use of honey in their sacrifices, because they suppose that a mixture of honey corrupts and deadens the wine. . . . This is no inconsiderable argument that Bacchus was worshipped by the Jews, in that among other kinds of punishment, that was most remarkably odious by which malefactors were forbid the use of wine for so long a time as the judge was pleased to prescribe. (*Symposiacs*, iv, 6; quoted from Knight.)

Plutarch saw the similarity of the Jewish rites to those of the Bacchus worshippers of Egypt, Syria, Greece, and those Plutarch himself was acquainted with. Up to that point he was right because there had been a considerable amount of borrowing. But, when he equated Bacchus with the Jewish God, he was wrong because he did not understand the process of adaptation in which the symbols remain in most instances the same while the overt meanings are changed. It is difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain the specific depth-value given these symbols by the Jews. Our guess is that it consisted of a mixture of "paganism" and mysticism.

Certainly those Jews who came to festivities in Jerusalem from outlying agricultural settlements, where rabbinic influence was weakest and cultural influences from foreign neighbors was strongest, understood the symbols as part of rain and fertility rites, while others interpreted them as symbols of redemption, dedication, and messianic hope. At any rate, the rabbis had to keep constant check, especially during the dances, to prevent the festivities from becoming bacchanalian.

What interests us here are the festival symbols described in the Mishnah and by Plutarch that found their way onto the ancient Jewish coins. It is the origin of meaning rather than late commentaries on the coin symbols that need concern us.

Many of these symbols on the coins belonged to the repertoire of Dionysus, or Bacchus, who became identical with the gods Atys, Adonis, Osiris, possibly Maha Deva of India, and Baal the Moabite. Bacchus originally was an Asiatic deity whose followers spread his worship, rites, and symbols throughout the ancient world, accounting for the numerous similarities found in ancient religious practices. Though Bacchus is associated with wine and revelry, some of his followers

were ascetics and, like the Orphics, religious reformers; but the symbols remained the same regardless of differences in doctrines and interpretations.

In the *lulab* Plutarch saw the well-known *thyrsus* of Bacchus. This thyrsus was the staff—a euphemism that requires



FIGURE 26

A popular phallic symbol or staff. (See also Figure 15.)

no explanation—of Bacchus that was always surmounted by a phallic pine cone. The *vine*, *vine leaf* and *grapes* found so prominently on the Jewish bronze coins and silver denarii were among the common fertility attributes of Bacchus. Particularly the vine of Bacchus became the vine of Judea that God was said to have transplanted from Egypt—a definite indication of the migration of this symbol. Further, the vine among the most ancient Chaldeans was called *ges-tin*, which



FIGURE 27

Cluster of grapes—an emblem most commonly associated with Bacchus.

literally meant “wood of life,” and at the same time the goddess of the Tree of Life in Mesopotamia was given the name

"the Lady of the Vine." As a symbol of life and fertility the vine was much used in ancient art and religious rites.

All these fruits, including the *date*, were shown on the Sacred Tree or Tree of Life in civilizations as far back as the Assyro-Chaldeans. Since these fruits yielded fermented liquor, the *eau de vie*, elixir of life, the intoxicating element, they were associated with Bacchus. Not only was he regarded as the sap and pulse of vegetation and the life-giving new year,

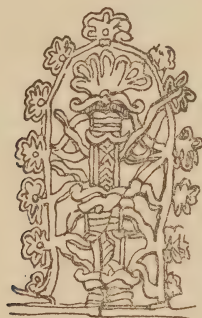


FIGURE 28

A complicated treelike symbol of the *yon*i, or door of life, to which priests offered pine cones, or fertilizing agents, especially in Assyria and Mesopotamia.

the deity of harvest and of plenty, but he was also identified with the inebriating effects of the juice of grapes and the vine.

One may wonder why Dionysus, or Bacchus, was given a significance by agricultural people that outstrips other deities. The answer to that lies perhaps in the fact that he closely allied himself with human problems. He is a suffering god, who felt the "ruin of the summer year at the hands of storm and winter," and he was said to typify "the agony of the bleeding grapes in the wine press." The Orphics even went further in that they described the death of Dionysus at the



hands of men who tore him apart and ate him, which resulted in man's original sin, compensated, however, by the notion of *entheos* or the god within every man. As part of their rituals, along with all the symbols already mentioned, he is pictured as a god suffering for man, being sacrificed and finally resurrected. It is no wonder then that the wine of Bacchus played a conspicuous role in religious ritual.

The *pomegranate* makes a frequent appearance on the ancient Jewish coins throughout almost every period and is on the reverse of halfshekels and shekels. It is a symbol of fertility, resembling a flower type. Some Jewish marriage contracts even had illuminated pomegranate symbols that show an oriental influence. It is a natural symbol of fertility, abundance and life because it contains hundreds of seeds, and it is present on religious monuments in all Semitic nations. Among the abundance of pomegranate illustrations we need call attention to only a few to show that it was a phallic symbol, characterizing the male generative triad. In the first place, the seed has an almost universal male connotation. Specifically on the Jewish "thick" shekel, the typical presentation of the symbol is that of three pomegranates on a single stem. Here we have the male triad and a stem, which is invariably phallic, a type of symbolism that is almost redundant in its complementary placement of symbols.

We also find pomegranates on the phallic pillars in front of King Solomon's Temple, a symbolic relationship which should be quite obvious. Finally, the pomegranates—and bells—dangled on the hem of the high priest's sacred garment while officiating during Jewish festivities. To Josephus the pomegranates and the bells also suggested thunder and lightning. With this he probably meant to indicate fertility through rain. But another association offers itself. Thunder

and lightning result in noise, and noise was thought instrumental in many festivities to chase away evil spirits. Bells particularly were used for this purpose in China, Assyria, and Egypt, where they were considered sacred instruments.\*

It is quite probable that the Jews adopted the custom of chasing away evil by the use of bells, as did other neighbors. In the Plutarch account, the Jewish priests wore bells that hung from the garment and made *noise* as the priests walked *through the streets*. The chasing-away-evil symbolism is usually part of an out-of-doors ceremony. As in the Festival of Tabernacles, this custom also may have been suggestively referred to in the monthly ceremony attending the blessing of the new moon. Today, only ultra-orthodox Jews observe this ceremony in the manner of the ancients. Essentially, it calls for recitation of the *Rosh Chodesh* prayer out in the *open*; joyful dancing and leaping toward the moon; an exchange of greetings by the worshippers that tends to become loud as they say, "*Peace* be with you." In addressing the moon, an ancient formula is intoned: "As I dance toward thee, but can not touch thee, so shall none of my *evil*-inclined enemies be able to touch me." (Quoted from *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1905 edition, vol. IX, p. 244.) The link to the turning away of evil through exclamatory celebration seems quite apparent.

One of the Biblical blessings to the Jews was, "Be fruitful and multiply." There are symbolic conventions that go with the firstborn, or fruit, of the union between male and female, who is figuratively given to God. So it is also with the firstlings of nature, or *bikkurim*, fruit or grain, that comes from the fertile union in nature. Moreover, fruit in ancient

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\* How symbols travels through time and geographic distances is shown by the fact that the *square* bells of China, dating from 2000 B.C., may also be found in Ireland's history.

thought symbolizes desire for union and in ancient art and literature is very frequently used in an erotic sense. For example, in Solomon's *Song of Songs* the lover asks to be comforted "with apples" and the loved one enticingly says, "I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine, of the juice of my pomegranate."

From the interpretation of fruit symbols it is natural enough to make a transition to the *cornucopia*. The cornucopia, or horn of plenty, appears on the Jewish coins either single or in pairs.\* Among the many mythological accounts of the origin of the cornucopia, there is one that tells how the infant god Jupiter was given by his mother, Rhea, to the care of the daughters of Melisseus, a Cretan king, who fed him with the milk of the goat Amalthea. Grateful Jupiter broke off one of the goat's horns and gave it to the daughters and blessed the horn with the power of becoming full with whatever its possessor wished. Amalthea was also the name of Bacchus' parent, and the goat-bodied satyrs, known for their sexual prowess, represented in Greek art with enormous phalli, were part of Bacchus' retinue. Whether it is the goat's horn or the bull's horn, the fertility symbolism is the same, both being animals of virile, male repute.\*

In animal worship that dates back some three thousand years, the bull occupied a vital place. Not too long ago thirty bodies of embalmed bulls were discovered at a temple site near Memphis in Egypt. It was believed that Apis, the bull god, was an incarnation of Osiris because Apis was born of a virgin heifer that had been impregnated by a heaven-sent ray. As an animal symbolizing the generative force in creation, it

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\* In Cretan shrines these horns are shown holding between them sacred phallic pillars. "Horns of plenty" may be seen on ancient Jewish coins in Figure 4 and Plates IV, XXIV and XXV.

was worshipped in many countries of the ancient world. As we have seen, in symbolism the part is taken to represent the whole so that the horn in the various shapes, from the suggestive phallic to the representational, indicates fertility. The cornucopia thus became synonymous with the horn.\*

In the Jewish festival, the horns of bullocks to be sacrificed were covered with gold and an *olive crown*, also found on the coins, which on the surface resembled the ceremonies of other ancients.† In popular usage, the cornucopia is filled to overflowing, but we no longer give it the same fertility significance as of old. At the same time the religious origin of the horn as a musical instrument may be retained in the form of the *shofar* that is blown during ceremonies.

Similar in derivation as the horn or cornucopia is the *trumpet*, tapering out in the form of a bell, a symbol which appears on the coins. Again ancient customs are intertwined

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\* In later times the horns of cuckoldry were derived from this fertility symbol, while we have a diminutive adjective which describes overly-stimulated sexual tendencies.

† How such festivities survived and were transplanted is clear from a description by the Reverend Philip Stubbs in 1553 of an English May Day celebration: "On Whitsunday all the young men and young women, husbands and wives, and old men as well, run wildly into the woods, hills and mountains where they spend the night in pleasant pastimes and revelry. In the morning they return bringing with them a birch and branches of trees. Some twenty or forty oxen, each one having a nosegay of flowers placed on the tips of its horns—in themselves symbols of the lingam—bring home the Maypole decorated with flowers and herbs and painted over in variable colors. Behind the Maypole follow two or three hundred men and women, and often even children, with great devotion. The devotees strew the ground round about with flowers, bind green boughs around the Maypole and set up bowers and arbors near by. Then they fall to dance about it like the heathen at the dedication of the idol. . . ." (Quoted from B. Z. Goldberg, *The Sacred Fire*, pp. 137-139.)

as we find that the Dionysiac trumpet was sounded to resurrect the god and call on him to assure the fertility and growth of crops, while the Jews signalled and prayed to God with the same intent of securing personal blessings of life and produce.

The small surface of the coins and the limited skill and tools of the ancient engraver made it easier to use *symbols* rather than detailed and realistic representations—except for human portrait heads that, significantly, were never put on Jewish coins by the Jerusalem mint. Then again, most of the symbols on the coins were conventional all over the ancient world so that even the Jews might have looked at them with a matter-of-fact attitude.

As we come to the coins that show symbols of the *Temple*, we again find traditional sexual symbolism. Along with the Temple, there are symbols of the *ark*, *star* or sun, forming a composite relation on some coins. The four pillars on the coins symbolize the *Temple*, and the historian Josephus tells us that these pillars formed a square containing the sanctuary, while a second square also enclosed a sanctuary and a third was the Holy of Holies. This architectural design met thoroughly planned specifications and was probably modeled after Moses' Tabernacle. To anyone familiar with the deep significance attributed to geometrical figures by the ancients, the choice of a square should be quite clear; it was no accidental design. As James Bonwick puts it: "The square, in a phallic sense, was the union of the two principles of creation—masculine and feminine. It gave the idea of completeness or perfection." The pillars themselves, aside from their phallic connotation, were sacred emblems of a male deity.\*

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\* Josephus also thought that the pillar-partitioning of the Tabernacle-Temple was "an imitation of universal nature. . . ."



For some time the decorative sort of scroll on the extremes of the temple roofs in ancient times proved to be puzzling, until the coin symbols of Tarentum, Camarina and other locales came to the rescue. On these coins we see the same designs, except that they are simplified and are like the swelling lines of sea waves. This fertility symbolism appears also on the Jewish coins above some of the Temple pillars.\*

Between the two center pillars on the Jewish coins is the symbol of the Ark of the Covenant, which had historically been with the Jews since the time of the Exodus from Egypt. In size and other features, particularly the rings which allowed the priests to carry it by means of rods, the Jewish *ark* resembles the Egyptian "holy box." Even a closer connection can be established when we take the word *thebes* to mean "ark" in Hebrew; Thebes was the Egyptian city where one of the famous Egyptian sacred boats or arks was constructed. The Egyptian ark, according to Clemens of Alexandria, contained the phallus of Bacchus-Osiris, and we are told that "the ark was certainly looked upon as the womb of nature, and the descent from it as the birth of the world." In some Egyptian arks a god is pictured as standing upright. Certainly the arks signified the relation of man to deity, a concept which the Jews spiritualized, though keeping the decorative trappings of foreign symbolism.

The *star* or *sun wheel* (interchangeable symbols) are found standing singly on coins attributed to King Alexander the

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\* About such a scroll-like, wavy, or zigzag line, Goodenough notes that "it is the primordial symbol of water, and even in Romanesque ornament it was used over church doorways in a manner suggesting that the flow of divine grace—which was the symbolic meaning of water in antiquity—was still felt as operative through the symbol by those who entered under it to worship in the churches."

Great and are also seen topping the Temple and ark symbols on other coins. Sun symbols are among the very oldest types discovered in ancient annals and the various sun gods were universally known as creators of all that exists in nature. In Hebrew the sun is often called *aur*, a word derived from the Egyptian sun god Aur, while many other parallels between Egyptian star and sun symbols are in evidence. Here too the elemental meanings are clear. Witness the following line from an Egyptian epic devoted to sun ritual: "The sun mutilated himself, and from the stream of blood existed all things"—an implicit reference to circumcision. On the Jewish coins the star or sun has rays or beams emanating from the center body, which are recognizable as old religious symbols for the impregnating and fertility-producing element.



FIGURE 29

The solar wheel, containing crosslike rays and seed pellets.

It was not unusual for the ancients to show a composite relation of symbols which made up a larger meaning. If we take the star or sun to indicate a life-giving creator, the ark as the divine spirit residing among men, the Temple as the earth (both temples and earth were commonly associated with female deities) and the columns as male counterparts, and the Temple roof representing heaven, with the wavy lines denoting fertility or rains of heaven, then we may venture the suggestion that a combination of these symbols on coins basically signify the universe.

The history of the other symbols that appear on the ancient Jewish coins follows the pattern which we have discussed, so that we only need mention them briefly. Flower symbolism as illustrated by the *lily* shows the male stem and



FIGURE 30

Ancient trinity symbol and flower type that is sometimes ornamentally attached to the cross. (See also Figure 1.)

the female leaves as an understandable unit. The Temple *menorah*, or candelabra, has an extremely complex background, but essentially it is a "brother" symbol of the seven-branched palm tree and the Bacchical vine; it is also closely related to festivals of light and ancient winter-solstice celebrations, from which the Jews probably derived symbols and the date of their Hanukkah observance. As for the symbols of the Temple utensils—the *amphora*, *ampulla*, *laver*—these were in one way or another used in wine and water rituals.

As we come to the *anchor* symbol on the Jewish coins, it is of interest to see what interpretation the famous historian H. Graetz gives it:

As Alexander Jannaeus ruled also over cities that included Greek inhabitants, he was the first Judaeian prince to stamp coins with a Greek inscription on one side, and a Hebrew inscription on the other. Both designate him as king. He used the cornucopia and the anchor as symbols, the anchor signifying his dominion over the cities situated on the sea. The coins he had stamped before he made his considerable conquests contained only the Hebrew inscription: "Jonathan the High Priest and the Commonwealth of the Judaeans."

It is natural enough for a historian to come to this conclusion, but a symbolist would accept this as only a partial answer. In the first place, Graetz has linked the anchor and the cornucopia, without, however, being able to explain it as a maritime symbol. In symbolic language both are related *only* as



FIGURE 31

The anchor dates back to most ancient coins. Here, in the simple lines, one recognizes individual phallic symbols: a half-moon, ship's mast, and a serpent entwined on a staff.

fertility symbols. We have already analyzed the cornucopia. As for the anchor symbol, if we look at its components, we find the following: the *crux-ansata* symbol held in the hands of Egyptian fertility gods and two half-moons symbolizing the female. The *crux ansata* itself is a truncated cross in the shape of a *T*, called *tau*, mounted by a sun symbol. In the course of time the *tau* became the Hebrew *tav* and appeared on the early coins—see our description of prototype I, page 148—but later it disappeared in the series and its place was taken by the sun or star symbol of the *crux ansata*. Again we see how closely related were the ancient coin symbols and how frequent their adaptation to new environments.



FIGURE 32

A form of the Egyptian *crux ansata* combining male and female symbols and resembling the *tav* letter.

In all these symbols the spiritual and the material merge. Although the Jews centered their faith in a monotheistic God, invisible and beyond nature, their eyes demanded something more tangible. They found it in symbols which in themselves point to a higher, abstract truth; and what language found difficult to express, the symbols summed up in easily understandable form.

All peoples have used symbols for religious purposes; the Jews were no exception. As agricultural people too, the Jews lived close to the seasons and the earth, so that both Biblical metaphors and symbols directly point to life-giving forces.



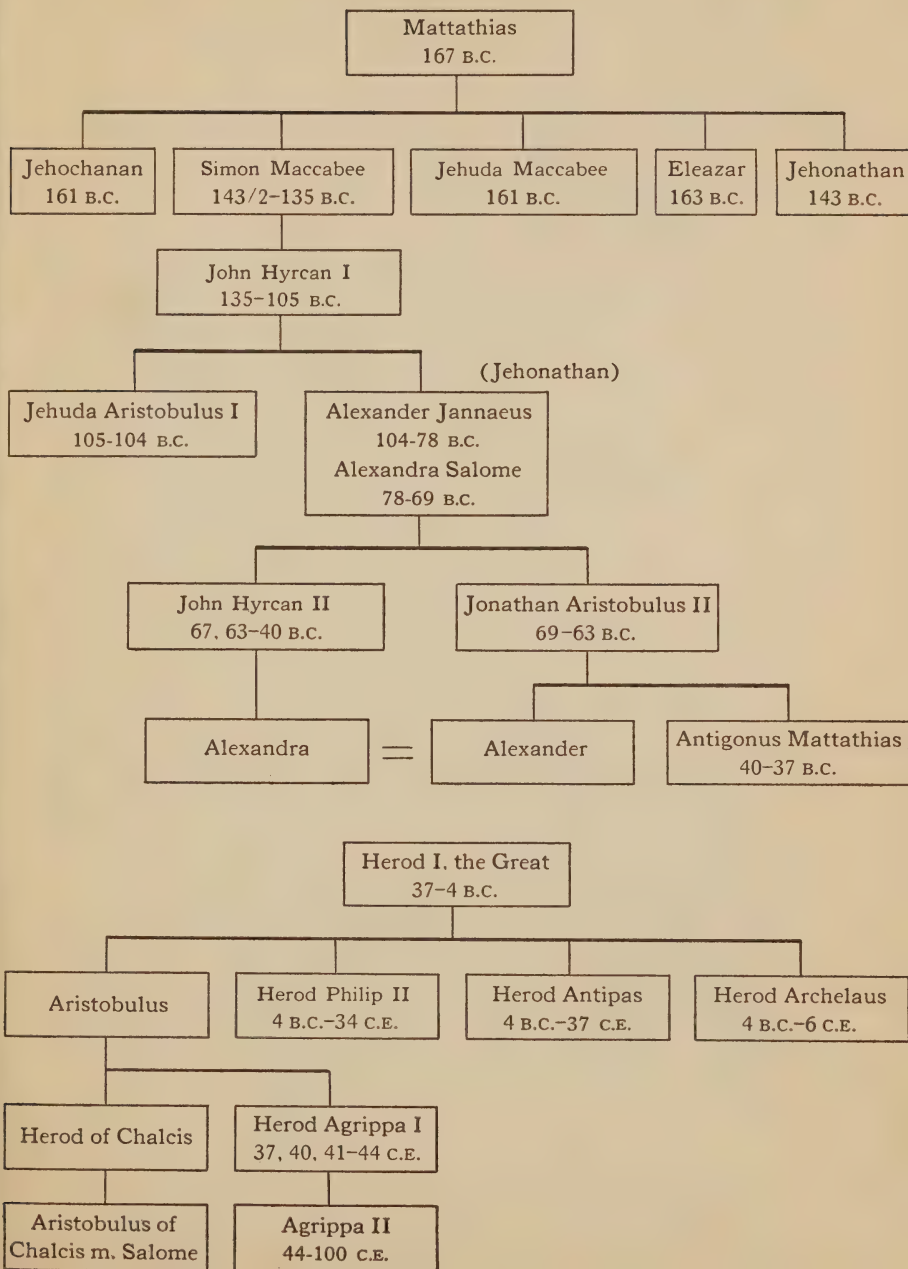


# *Appendixes*

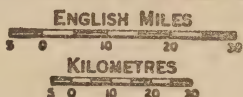


# APPENDIX A

## *Genealogical Table*



# ANCIENT PALESTINE



THE JEWISH STATE UNDER JUDAS

ADDITIONS UNDER JONATHAN

" " SIMON

" " JOHN HYRCANUS

" " ARISTOBULUS I

" " ALEXANDER JANNAEUS

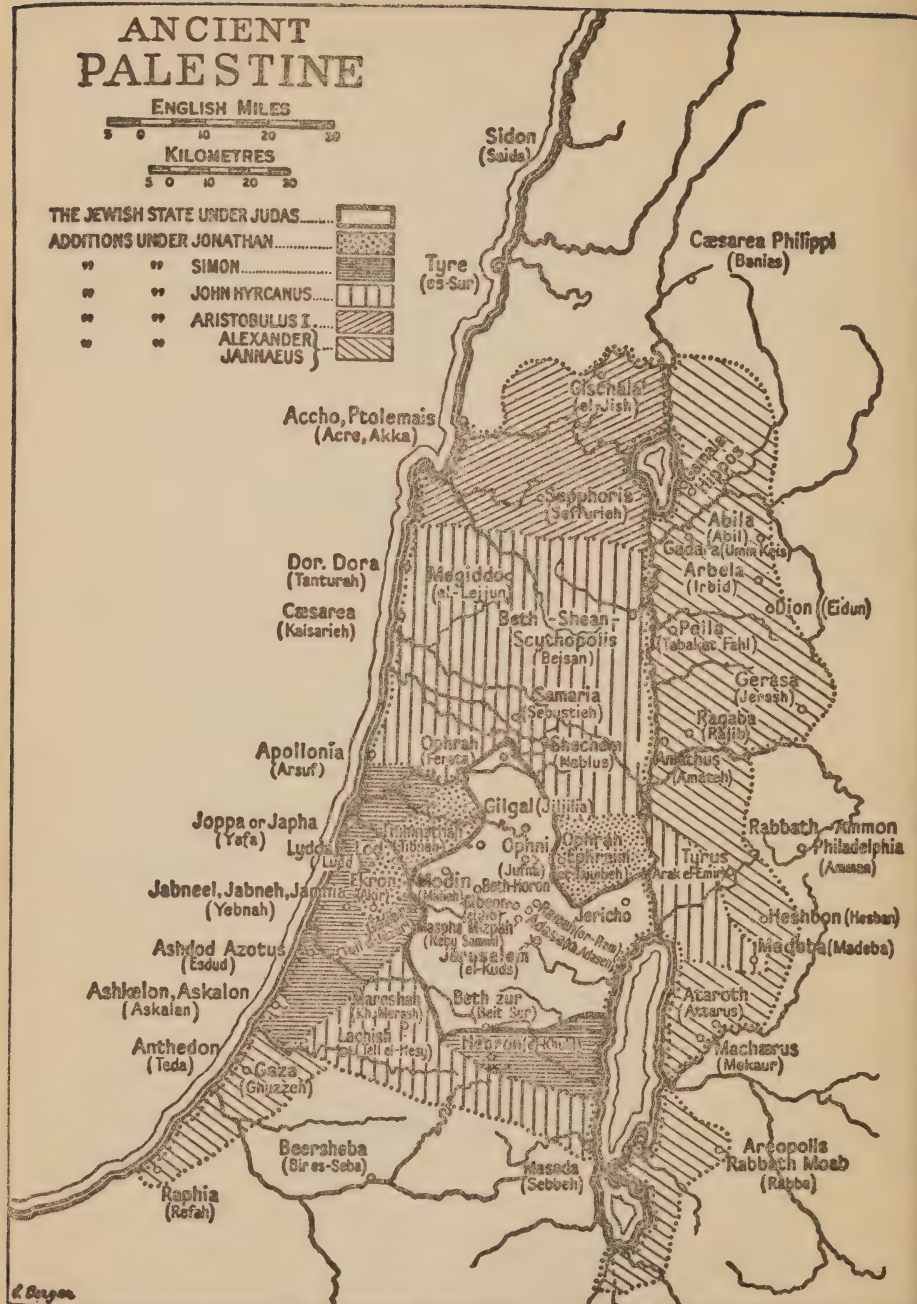


FIGURE 33

Map of ancient Palestine, showing expansion of Jewish territory under the Maccabees. (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. "Palestine.")



## APPENDIX B

### Numismatic Detective Work Or, The Identification of the Temple Laver

FROM TIME to time scholars, with the help of architects and artists, attempt to restore and re-create objects that have been destroyed or pilfered from their original setting. In many fortunate circumstances it is possible to make models of the original objects when detailed descriptions are found in written records or sculptural representation. When Jerusalem was sacked and the Temple destroyed some two thousand years ago precious religious objects and utensils were carried off to Rome. In the pattern of historical vandalism and wars these objects were again looted when Rome was later invaded, and from then on were dispersed and lost in the reaches of Europe and the East. Some idea of the Temple treasures is still evident from the arch which the Roman Senate erected to the memory of Titus. On it we see in bas-relief a table of show-bread—the twelve loaves of unleavened bread placed every Sabbath by the ancient Hebrew priests on the altar before God; the priestly trumpets; and the famous seven-branched candelabra.

The Bible and the Talmud, in addition, describe these Temple objects in detail. But for all the objects described in these sources and pictured on the Titus arch, there are many which are only given passing mention. How are we going to reconstruct these on the basis of sketchy information? It is here that the numismatists can be of help.

With a little numismatic detective work, let us see what

we can do about an object which is frequently mentioned in the Bible and the Talmud, namely the Temple *laver*. No details about its shape and directions for its construction are given. What we do know about it is summarized in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*:

Between the altar . . . and the tabernacle stood the laver of bronze . . . to the description of which only a few words are devoted, and these few are found not in the main body of the Priestly Narrative, but in a section bearing internal evidence of a later origin. Beyond the fact that it was a large basin of bronze, and stood upon a base of the same material, we know nothing of its workmanship or ornamentation. It served to hold the water required for the ablutions of the priests in the course of their ministrations, and it is frequently mentioned in the secondary strata of the priestly legislation.

Though the records do not tell much about the laver, or wash basin, in this case coins come to our aid. First, it is fair to make the assumption that the reason the Bible spends a great deal of description on some objects is that they were unusual and striking in shape and general design. Because they were different from other specimens of their kind, they required a careful description by the ancient chroniclers. On the other hand, those objects that received only brief mention were probably similar in every way to the pattern of other pieces of their kind which could be found in everyday use. Perhaps for some utensils definite or special construction and ornamentation were prescribed for religious rites, while other objects required no specifications.

If we follow through on the idea that those objects in the Bible which receive only slight mention were common in their day, our search should then be directed toward finding similar or identical objects, even if we have to go to areas

which lie outside of Palestine. Now as far as the laver and its reconstruction are concerned, we can be guided by the pictorial presentations on ancient Jewish coins. Among them are the so-called "thick" shekels and "Zion" bronzes, at once the best known and at the same time most controversial coins, about which we have already talked. We noted that their obverse sides carry the inscription and design of a vessel. There were five different issues of these shekels and they underwent a gradual change and development in shape and style. The pictorial vessel particularly appears in different forms.

Recent opinion has it that the vessel on the shekel actually is a chalice. This opinion is based on two mistaken notions. One comes as the result of an optical illusion, since the size of the vessel cannot be properly determined from viewing it on a coin. The casual observer might very understandably suppose it to be a chalice of table-use size, possibly a little more heavy than a wine glass of large proportions. That this is a wrong conclusion can be seen from the proportion on the bronze coin of Anazarbus. (For the coin, see Plate XXX.) There we observe that the basin reaches the waistline of a man; still, the size of the drawing on this coin is about the same as on the Jewish coin. Another point of interest is that on both coins the shape of the base of the symbol is similar.\*

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\* A similar situation arises regarding the Temple *menorah*. On Plate XXXI is the picture of a Jewish coin of Mattathias Antigonus. Here, again, the item is depicted in a size which leads us to imagine that the original was not larger than an average eight-branch candlestick, used today as a Chanukkah lamp, which might be easily held in the hand. However, the Temple *menorah* must have been a very much larger object, at least three feet high and of considerable weight. All we need do is look at the frieze on the triumphal Arch of Titus in Rome and see the size of the *menorah* in relation to the height of the men carrying it. From the tiny picture on the coin, however, and the absence of contrast for true measurements we could easily be misled.

Also it seems quite understandable that the vessel is mistaken as a small chalice because its shape resembles the drinking cups popular throughout many centuries, especially in connection with religious ritual. True, we find also similar shapes among Mycenaean pottery; but it should be remembered that in classical antiquity no such vessel was ever used for drinking. The Greeks and those people who were under their cultural influence drank exclusively from either deep or flat double-handled bowls. Furthermore, no such cups can be established as having been used during the religious services in the Temple of Jerusalem, although one would expect an object represented on the shekels to have some reference to religion or religious rites.

The first scholar, to our knowledge, to compare this object on the shekels with similar representations on Greek coins was Dr. Paul Romanoff.\* He pointed out the close resemblance also between it and the Temple laver: "The type resembling the cup . . . is resembling the Temple laver. . . . The closest resemblance to [it] is a basin type on a coin of Pergamum." As a matter of fact, Dr. Romanoff is of the opinion that the vessel is not a drinking cup but the *omer*, which contained the First Fruit of the harvest offered in the Temple. However, he also mentions the laver because of its striking resemblance with the object on the Greek coins. The main point, in our opinion, should be seen in the fact that Dr. Romanoff opposes the idea of the vessel being a drinking cup. On Plate XXX we reproduce the Pergamene coin in question and add a reproduction of a coin from Anazarbus.

If we follow this path and interpret the object as a basin and not a cup, then it seems quite natural to think of it as the laver in the Temple of Jerusalem.

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\* Paul Romanoff, *Jewish Symbols on Ancient Jewish Coins*.

As has been said above, the laver does not belong to the group of utensils in the Temple which are described extensively in the Bible. It is only said: "The laver and its foot. . . ."

The Talmud, however, mentions a fact which may be significant for further identification:

Ben-Katin made twelve stop-cocks for the laver (Ex. 30:18 ff.) which before had but two; and he also made a device for the laver that its water should not be rendered unfit by remaining overnight. (Note: Anything within a sacred vessel is sacred itself, but anything remaining in a sacred vessel overnight without being covered, turns unpure and cannot be used.) King Monobaz made of gold all the handles of the vessels used on the Day of Atonement. His mother Helena set a golden candlestick over the door of the Sanctuary. She also made a golden tablet on which was written the paragraph of the Suspected Adulteress. Miracles had befallen the gates of Nicanor and his memory was kept in honor.\*

If the vessel on the shekels is thought of as a basin and no longer as a chalice, and if we bear in mind this note of the Talmud and bring it into relation with the basin, then certain details in the design of the shekels will be seen in a new light. The shekels with the number "1" have a projection on either side of the vessel like an extension of the rim (see Fig. 1). The shekels with the number "2" have been issued in two variations. Both have a thoroughly remodeled and improved design. One type shows the two projections but without the pearls.

On the other type of the second issue the vessel appears with a row of beads instead of the projections (see Plate II).

Obviously, this is the later one of the two variations, since

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\* *Tractate Joma*, Chap. 3, v. 10., English translation by H. Danby.



it remains unchanged throughout the third, fourth and fifth issues of the shekels.

This rim of beads hitherto was considered merely ornamental and was presumed to have been the result of greater technical skill of the coiner. (In the first issue of the shekel, the vessel shows up in a crude form with a broad rim, under each side of which there is a pearl.)

With the new interpretation in mind and considering the vessel to be the laver, it may not seem farfetched to regard the rim of beads as an illustration of Ben-Katin's gift. Under this assumption the two projections on either side of the vessel would represent the two stopcocks, which existed primarily, and the rim of beads would show the row of the new stopcocks donated by Ben-Katin. Consequently, Ben-Katin would have lived at the beginning of Hyrcan I's reign—during the coining of the shekels—and the donation would have taken place during the issue of the second shekels.

There is no reason to doubt the truth of the story itself. We may rely on the chronicle all the more, as in the case of Nicanor, who is mentioned in the same passage of the Mishnah, the literary tradition has been confirmed by archeological evidence. A cave on Mount Scopus bears the inscription: "Nicanor of the Gates." \*

The name Ben-Katin itself does not give any conclusive clues. Apparently, it is not a name commonly used such as Jonathan or David; rather it may be a name referring to the place from which the man came, or to some characteristic

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\* According to the *Tosephta* the story goes: When the gates were brought by sea from Alexandria, the ship was caught by a storm, and to lighten the ship they threw one of the gates overboard and when they were about to throw the second he said to them, "Throw me after it." The storm at once ceased, and when they landed at Jaffa, the other gate was found beneath the ship's keel.

trait of his person. The word "Ben" indicates such an attributive, but may also mean that he was the son of a man called Katin, so that Katin may be a real name or some sort of a nickname. Late commentators speak of Ben-Katin as of a high priest, without giving a source for this assumption. The fact that Ben-Katin may be a given name as well as an original name of a person makes it possible to form any conjectures about the bearer and to see a historical person in him, though not mentioned in the literary sources.

Despite the numerous gaps in the documentary sources from which we can draw, it may be seen that the ancient coins offer important clues to the numismatist who patiently relates the coin symbols and designs to their historical setting. In the case which we have just unfolded through numismatic detective work, we have been rewarded with a proper identification of the Temple laver as it has been preserved for us throughout the ages on the shekel coins.

# APPENDIX C

## The Alphabets Used on the Jewish Coins

(Prepared from a chart in the British Museum Catalogue, vol. "Palestine.")

	Freedom and Redemption Coins of Jerusalem, Simon and Eleazar	Redemption of Zion Year 4, Third Brass	Redemption of Zion Year 4, First & Second Brass	Freedom of Zion Year 2 & 3	Mattathiah
א	פפפפ	כככככ	ככ		פפפ
ב	גג	גגגגגגגג	גג		גגגגגג
ג	ד	דד	ד		אגדא
ד					הההה
ה	זזזז				זזזזזזזז
ו	חחחחחחחח טטטטט	י י	י	י	י י
ז	ככ				
ח	לללללל		ללל	לל	ללללל
ט					
י	ממממממממ נננ	סססס	סססס	סס	סססססס טטט
כ	פפ				פפפפ
ל	קקקקק	קק	ק	קקק	קקק
מ	רררררררר			רר	רררררררר
נ	שששששששש	ששששש	שש	ש	שששששש
ס					
ש	תתתתתת	תתתת	תתתתת		
ת					
פ	צצצצ	צצצצ	צצ	צצצ	צצצצ
ק					
ר	קקקק	קקקק	קק	ק	קקקק
ש	קקקקקקק	קקקקקקק	קקקק	ק	
ת	קקקק	קקק	קקקק	קק	קקקקק

FIGURE 34

Jonathan	Jehonathan	Jehuda	Jehochanan	AR Shekel and Halfshekel	
				FFF	N
9999	999	9	99999	9	2
11	111111	11	1111	1	1
444	444444	44	44444444	4444	7
222	22222222	22222	2222222222	222	8
1111	1111111111	111	111111	1111	1
					1
8888	8888	8	88888	88	11
					0
222	2222222222	22	22222	222222	1
551	55555555	55	5555555		3
	11	1	11111	11111	5
77	7777	7	7777777	777	8
333	33333333	33	3333333333		9
					0
				0	9
					0
				1111	5
				77777	7
999	9999	9	99999	999	7
			~	WW	W
	+ + x +		x		7

FIGURE 35

Greek Alphabet and Equivalents			Hebrew Alphabet and Equivalents		
<i>Number</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Form</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Form</i>
1	Alpha	A	1	Alef	א
2	Beta	B	2	Beth	ב
3	Gamma	Γ	3	Gimel	ג
4	Delta	Δ	4	Daleth	ד
5	Epsilon	E	5	He	ה
6	Stigma	Ϛ	6	Vav	ו
7	Zeta	Z	7	Zayin	ז
8	Eta	H	8	Heth	ח
9	Theta	Θ	9	Teth	ט
10	Iota	I	10	Yodh	י
20	Kappa	K	20	Kaph	כ
30	Lamda	Λ	30	Lamedh	ל
40	Mu	M	40	Mem	מ
50	Nu	N	50	Nun	נ
60	Xi	Ξ	60	Samekh	ס
70	Omikron	O	70	Ayin	ע
80	Pi	Π	80	Pe	פ
90	Koppa	Q	90	Cadha	צ
100	Rho	P	100	Qoph	ק
200	Sigma	Σ	200	Resh	ר
300	Tau	T	300	Shin	ש
400	Upsilon	Y	400	Tav	ת

FIGURE 36

Comparative table of the Greek and Hebrew alphabets.



## APPENDIX D

# The Authenticity of Three Shekel Hoards From Jerusalem \*

SEVERAL YEARS before the Second World War the coin market suddenly became flooded with excellent specimens of the Jewish shekels of the third issue. Many of them had evidently never circulated in antiquity and, therefore, aroused suspicion as to their authenticity; even more so because great quantities were offered by Palestinian dealers. Subsequently the fact became known that a large hoard was accidentally discovered in Jerusalem by workers building a road. As no one present understood the scientific value of the find, the coins were at once distributed among the lucky finders and disappeared as quickly as they had come in sight. The earthen container of the hoard, broken of course, was thrown away as rubbish; the coins were sold for pennies by the finders to anyone willing to buy.

When the Department of Antiquities of Palestine learned of the incident and began to salvage for science whatever was possible, it was too late to reconstruct the find and thus to repair the damage caused by one of the greatest misfortunes in Jewish numismatics.

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\* The numismatist and coin collector must approach each newly discovered coin hoard with extreme caution. A better reason can hardly be found than in the story of three shekel hoards unearthed in Jerusalem not too long ago. In this article published by *The Numismatist* (September, 1952), Wolf Wirgin disproves the description or identification of the shekel finds as they were interpreted by numismatists at the time.

Subsequently the Department of Antiquities submitted the available material to the late Sir George F. Hill, Keeper of Coins at the British Museum in London, for examination and description. Sir George published the hoard with all the details put at his disposal. At the same time, he expressed the view that this hoard, if authentic, would be proof for his theory that the "thick" shekels had been minted during the First Jewish Revolt against the Romans in 66-70. The hoard, as Sir George describes it, allegedly contained also many Tyrian silver coins which are clearly dated and he concluded from the dates of the latter coins the possible time of issue of the Jewish shekels. The authenticity of the content of the hoard, as far as the mixture of Jewish and Tyrian coins is concerned, was later disproved by archeologists and numismatists in Jerusalem proper, and consequently the hoard was considered meaningless for the accurate dating of the shekel.

But shortly after this controversy had taken place, two more hoards were sold in Jerusalem to Prof. Reifenberg and Prof. Sukenik. The composition of these two hoards is very similar to the one described by Sir George. They are the same mixture of Jewish shekels and Tyrian silver coins, although, of course, in different numbers.

These hoards have been published by Prof. Reifenberg and by Prof. Sukenik, so that all the material can be examined at convenience. Both authors again present the theory that the Jewish shekels originate from the time of the First Revolt. Professor Reifenberg incorporated the description of his hoard into his widely read book, *Ancient Jewish Coins* (1947), and this dating of the shekels became an established fact to many numismatists.

Now that a number of years have elapsed and the controversy has somewhat abated, it may appear desirable to review the entire material and consider it as a whole; one of the

papers, written in Hebrew and hence not readily accessible, has been translated for the first time by this writer. The study of all the articles today, highlighting as this reading does, the closeness of the successive offerings of these hoards, has yielded results quite different from those experienced several years ago.

The story of the hoards as it unfolds before the reader has surprising implications. The conclusions drawn by this writer and based upon close scrutiny of all factors involved will prove to be of interest for two reasons: They will contribute to a clarification of the shekel problem; they will also be of value to numismatists who are engaged in the study of coin hoards and their correlation with historical events.

In the following description of the three hoards we follow the authors as closely as possible simply by quoting from their respective articles. However, because of the limited space we cannot reproduce the catalogs of the coins of the hoards, which consist of a very detailed description of each individual coin. We have to restrict ourselves to give the number of each kind and the years.

## I

Hoard No. 1 as published by the late George F. Hill in the *Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities of Palestine*, 1936, vol. VI, pp. 78-83:

The date of the 'thick' Jewish shekels, which bear the type of a chalice on the obverse and a stem with three flowers on the reverse, has always been the chief crux of Jewish numismatics. The traditional attribution is to Simon Maccabaeus. The first to attribute them to the First Revolt was Ewald, and he was supported in 1887 by Theodore Reinach. This date was favoured on grounds of style by Imhoof-Blumer.

But in 1903 Reinach recanted, and produced a number of arguments in favour of the Maccabaeon date. In my *Catalogue of the Coins of Palestine*, in 1914, I dealt with these arguments, and on a careful analysis of the epigraphic evidence came to the conclusion that Reinach's first dating was right. I have seen no reason since to change my opinion. The only new evidence that has hitherto come to light, that of a find in which an 'almost perfectly preserved shekel and half-shekel were associated with Herodian bronzes and coins of the Procurators', was, so far as it went, conclusive in favour of the attribution to the First Revolt; but unfortunately no description of the find was published.

Now, however, I am able, by the kindness of Mr. E. T. Richmond, the Director of Antiquities in Palestine, to set forth another piece of evidence. In November 1935 a rumour became current that a collection of 160 shekels had been found either at Ophel or near St. Stephen's Gate. The finder and the original source of the coins which were being sold in the market have not been traced; but 64 shekels and 25 non-Jewish coins were deposited by the dealers who were known to possess them in the hands of the Government; and these I have been allowed to examine. Information as to the circumstances of the find is not forthcoming; but these coins have all suddenly appeared on the market together, and both series, Jewish and non-Jewish, appeared in different hands at the same time. On the other hand, it is said, as Mrs. Baldwin Brett kindly informs me in a letter from Beirut dated 24th March, that a hoard of silver coins, tetradrachms of Tyre and Tyrian tetradrachms of Demetrius II, was unearthed at Nablus. The question arises whether the two hoards have been confused. But I think that that must be answered in the negative, because among the coins found in the hands of dealers in Jerusalem, and now submitted to me and described below, there was not a single coin of Demetrius II. Mrs. Baldwin Brett cites an opinion which was given her, that the two lots of 64 shekels and 25 non-Jewish coins did

not form a single hoard 'because of the difference in external condition of the two lots, the shekels having been incrustated with horn silver of a deep bluish hue, the Tyrian coins with a light-green patination.' She continues: 'A few of the latter coins reached Beyrouth, where I saw a few survivors, and the dealer there was uncertain about their provenance, advancing Tyre as a supposition.'

All this makes it necessary to set forth the evidence merely for what it is worth. Nevertheless, as to the condition of the coins, it may be observed, as Mr. Stanley Robinson has pointed out to me, that the Tyrian coins, being made of poor metal, would naturally show green patination. Though not incrustated like the shekels, many of them did show a certain amount of purplish discolouration.

The Nablus find may, I think, be definitely set aside as not having anything to do with the coins now in question. If the latter had attracted coins from the Nablus find, we should expect to see coins of Demetrius II among them. The only question remaining is whether the Jewish shekels come from one hoard and the Ptolemaic and Tyrian coins from another. That question will perhaps never be answered. But at any rate the assumption that we are dealing with a single hoard is not unreasonable, and, since every piece of evidence about the date of the Jewish shekels is welcome, may be taken as a working hypothesis until it is disproved.

So much by way of reserve. I now proceed to describe the 89 coins which have been placed in my hands.

The catalog of the hoard consists of the following coins:

2 Ptolemaic tetradrachms of the years 254 and 258 B.C.

22 shekels of type of the period 126/5 B.C. to A.D. 65/6

1 shekel of Tyre of 29/8 B.C., a quasi-barbarous imitation

64 Jewish shekels of the 3rd year

---

89 coins altogether.



Sir George continues:

The most significant feature of the find is that the shekels are, in the first place, all of the same year (the third), and in the second, all in absolutely unworn condition. They have seen no circulation, and must have been secreted almost immediately after they were issued. Some of them are incrustrated, and there is one lot of three which are stuck together. Some of them are discoloured; but the majority are in quite brilliant condition. But the coins associated with them are in very different case. A few of them are in just passable condition; only one of them, and that not a regular issue, but a semi-barbarous copy of a coin of Tyre, can be described as not worn. The great majority are worn, much worn, or very badly worn. They must have been in circulation a long time. But only two of them belong to a pre-Maccabaeian period. These are coins of Ptolemy Philadelphus, dating from the middle of the third century. Owing to their worn condition it has been no easy matter to make them out; but one was struck at Joppa, probably in 254 B.C., the other probably at Sidon, about the same time. All the remaining associated coins are Phoenician shekels of the mint of Tyre, with the one imitation already mentioned. The earliest of these dates from 40/39 B.C., the latest from A.D. 19/20. Obviously, if the evidence of coin-finds means anything, the Maccabaeian date for the Jewish shekels is excluded. Since the non-Jewish coins are, as I have said, worn by long circulation, the Jewish shekels, on the other hand, in mint-state, we are driven to the conclusion that these Jewish shekels must belong to the First Revolt, since no other episode, until the Second Revolt, of which the coinage is perfectly well known, can supply an occasion for them.

From the middle of the third century B.C. to the year A.D. 68/9 is indeed a long life for coins, but the Jews must have had silver, if only for the payment of temple-dues.

The fact that the Jewish shekels are all of the same year

suggests that the owner of the hoard got them straight from the mint when the year's issue was made. His previous savings consisted of these associated non-Jewish coins, and he buried all together. This is, I think, more likely than the supposition that they may all have come from the site of the mint, and that the non-Jewish coins were awaiting the melting pot.

I have said that the barbarous imitation of the Tyrian shekel is not worn. That means that it may have been produced not very long before the time of the First Revolt. And this is quite in keeping with the rule that imitations are usually made when the originals are no longer being issued and are hard to come by.

## II

THE reaction of Sir George's conclusion that the hoard is proof for his theory of dating the shekels came from Jerusalem. It was Prof. A. Reifenberg who presented the general opinion about this matter in the *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society*, 1939/40, vol. XIX, from which we quote:

[The] find which G. Hill has described in *QDAP*, VI, 1936, pp. 78 *et seq.*, is unhappily not conclusive. Here shekels of the year 3 are said to have been found in association with a Ptolemaic tetradrachm of 285 B.C. (!) and Tyrian shekels dating from between 126/5 B.C. to A.D. 19/20. Both Jewish and Tyrian shekels were offered for sale at about the same time, but there is no evidence whatsoever that they were actually found together. All the available evidence is against this assumption, a fact further strengthened by the complete difference of the patina, to which also Hill draws the attention.

This view is confirmed by the Rev. Pere N. Van der Vliet of St. Anne's, Jerusalem, who told me quite definitely that the coins were not found together.

As per Prof. Reifenberg new and decisive archaeological evidence shall definitely decide the classification of the thick shekels.

### III

HOARD NO. 2 is published by Prof. E. L. Sukenik in *Kedem*, 1942, vol. I, pp. 15-19. *Kedem* is a publication of the Museum of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. The following is the English translation of the article:

About two years ago the Museum of Jewish Antiquities of the Hebrew University obtained a lot of 52 silver coins discovered in the vicinity of Bir-Sit. (Shekels found at this site in 1890 had already been described in PEFQuSt. 1896, p. 155, note.) This lot had originally contained 54 coins, namely

- 5 Jewish shekels
- 46 Tyrian shekels
- 2 Tyrian halfshekels
- 1 twisted coin

Two Jewish shekels of the year 2 had been sold before we bought the hoard and accordingly we obtained 52 coins only.

#### CATALOG OF THE HOARD

##### *Jewish shekels:*

- #1 Shekel of the first year
- #2 Shekel of the second year
- #3 Shekel of the third year

All the Jewish shekels are very well preserved, the lettering is clear and sharp. They are covered by a dark, deep violet patina.

##### *Tyrian shekels:*

#4-50

47 pieces dated 11/12 C.E. till 60/61 C.E.

*Tyrian halfshekels:*

#51-52

1 of the year 14/15 C.E., the other with worn date.

A small number of the Tyrian shekels are a little worn, but on most of them the design and the inscription are well discernible. They are covered with the same dark, deep violet patina of different thicknesses, the same as on the Jewish shekels, with which they had been found together. On some of these Tyrian shekels the inscriptions on the reverse is only partially readable, because it is in some cases worn, in some cases out of place. The Tyrian shekels are all made of different dies, even when dated of the same year. The specimen No. 43 of the year 60/61 C.E. seems to be unique and has never been published.

*Conclusion*

The superiority of the hoard obtained by our Museum over that one found in Jerusalem is based on the fact that it is known that the two types of shekels were found together. An additional proof is that the patina on both types is definitely the same. It is even more important by the fact that the Tyrian shekels are dated from 11/12 till 60/61 C.E., i.e., five years before the beginning of the Jewish War against the Romans. All of them show the letters KP on the obverse. According to Hill (BMC., Phoenicia, p. CXXXXV) the Tyrian shekels are marked with this letter only since 19/18 B.C. Accordingly, the year 19/18 B.C., is *terminus a quo* for those coins on which the date cannot be discerned. Of the halfshekels, the first one is of the year 14/15 C.E., the other one looks like a barbaric imitation.

Through this hoard it can be definitely established that the thick shekels belong to the period shortly before the destruction of the Temple.

## IV

Hoard No. 3 is Prof. Reifenberg's and is published in the *Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities of Palestine*, 1944, vol. IX, pp. 83-85.

Some years ago Sir George Hill described a find of Tyrian and Jewish shekels. On the assumption that both series came from one hoard, the author regarded them as additional evidence for his dating of the Jewish shekels to the First Revolt. Both Jewish and Tyrian shekels were indeed offered for sale at about the same time, but it is more than doubtful whether they were actually found together. The dating of these coins being the 'crux' of Jewish numismatics, any new evidence with regard to this problem is of special interest.

The pyxis and coins described here were acquired by me in October 1940. Here again unhappily no strictly archaeological evidence is available, but there is no reason to doubt the statement of the dealer that the pyxis containing the coins was actually found at or near Silwan, the ancient Siloah. It may be mentioned in this connexion that neither the peasant who sold the pyxis to the dealer, nor the latter himself attached any great monetary value to the pyxis itself. Most of the Tyrian coins, and two of the shekels, show the same kind of green patina as the interior of the pyxis. When bought, this was partly covered with the yellowish-brown loam characteristic of the hill-side near Jerusalem. When acquiring pyxis and coins I was told by the dealer that he had already sold some well-preserved shekels of the same find. These shekels, as I later ascertained, all belonged to year 2.

The *pyxis* is of bronze and has acquired a beautiful greenish-blue patina. Its diameter is 7.5 cm., and its height including the lid is 9 cm. The cover of the pyxis has a pierced handle. The workmanship is excellent, and the cover fits



perfectly, which probably accounts for the good preservation of the coins. The pyxis rests on a moulded ring base at the circumference, and the bottom is reinforced by a sort of metal stud riveted to the centre.

This hoard consists of:

8 shekels of Tyre from the period 126/5 B.C. to A.D. 69/70.

1 shekel of Tyre of A.D. 64/5. Somewhat barbarous style.

3 Jewish shekels of the first and second years.

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12 coins altogether.

The writer continues:

In the view of the excellent preservation of the Jewish Shekels and the improbability of any coin remaining in circulation for two centuries, the shekels can not date from the Maccabean period. It is therefore evident that they belong to the First Revolt. The hitherto unpublished somewhat barbarous Tyrian shekel of A.D. 64/5 proves that the issue of full (Tyrian) shekels did not stop in A.D. 56. The almost mint condition of this Tyrian shekel, and of the Jewish shekels of the year 2 (A.D. 67/68), proves that the coins were deposited shortly after the issue of the latter. Since no shekels of year 3 (A.D. 68/69) were found, it is safe to assume that the pyxis containing the coins was hidden in A.D. 67/68, about two years before the destruction of Jerusalem.

## V

HAVING studied the four papers the reader may feel that some remarks are necessary in order to clarify a question of such importance. All aspects of the case ought to be carefully considered before definitely establishing the date of issue of the shekels.

We have seen that Hill's conclusions were rejected be-

cause the authenticity of the first hoard could not be established beyond any doubt. This was a very sound deduction. However, after carefully reading the descriptions of the two hoards acquired later by the Professors Sukenik and Reifenberg, scepticism is bound to arise as to the authenticity of these hoards, too. No sufficient evidence has been obtained about the circumstances of the finds; even though the dealers may have been honest, nothing is known about the trustworthiness of their informants and the finders of the coins.

The publications of Professors Sukenik and Reifenberg both mention that the respective hoards were acquired in 1940, the same year in which the first Reifenberg article appeared. That his hopes were answered so quickly is rather striking; and it would, indeed, be one of the most unusual circumstances in the history of hoards that both hoards in question should have consisted of basically the very same types of coins as the one described in Hill's publication. The fact that the authors do not quote each other proves that Professors Reifenberg and Sukenik bought their hoards simultaneously. It is only in his manual of 1947 that Professor Reifenberg mentions in a footnote the hoard described in *Kedem*.

The main support of the theories of Professors Reifenberg and Sukenik lies in their emphasizing the fact that the patina is identical on both the Tyrian and the Jewish shekels. Yet, though different patina indicates that coins come from different hoards, identical patina is in no way a sure indication that they belong together. For it has to be considered that there are areas in Palestine where the soil contains certain minerals causing the same patina on coins found in that particular region, regardless of whether they are found singly or in lots.

It appears from the foregoing that possibly the publications of Hill and of Professor Reifenberg were studied with fraudulent intentions by people who saw a ready market for finds and hoards. Palestine dealers have a huge stock of all kinds of coins and antiques and are thus in a position to easily make up hoards like the ones described. It should be remembered that the coin business was, at that time, almost dead because of the war.

No hoards of such composition had ever been found previous to Hill's article, and no such hoards were reported during the ten years following the publications of Reifenberg and Sukenik. The elapse of a decade has clarified our judgment in this respect and has made it appropriate and even compelling to re-examine the circumstances that

- a) Hoards Nos. 2 and 3 in accordance with the pattern set by hoard No. 1 consist of Jewish shekels and Tyrian shekels only, excluding any other coin.
- b) Each hoard has one somewhat barbarous Tyrian shekel.
- c) Hoards Nos. 2 and 3 have been offered almost simultaneously.
- d) Hoards Nos. 2 and 3 have been acquired almost immediately after Reifenberg made public that Hill's conclusions were rejected because of the difference in the patina.
- e) As a result, hoards Nos. 2 and 3 consist of coins with only one and the same patina. But on account of the difference in the composition of the metal (cf. Hill in the description of hoard No. 1), a difference in the patina should be inevitable since different metals exposed to the same chemicals in the soil should not produce identical patina.
- f) Both from hoard Nos. 2 and 3, second shekels were said to have been removed prior to the selling of the hoard to the present owner.

- g) No hoard of such composition had ever been published previous to Hill's article, and no such hoards were reported during the ten years following the publications of Sukenik and Reifenberg.

It may be concluded that since these hoards were not found under archeological supervision but only purchased later, they cannot be regarded as safe for scientific deductions.

## APPENDIX E

# About the Coins Found at the Time of the Dead Sea Scroll Discovery

IN THE caves of Khirbet Qumrân some of the most significant discoveries in the history of archeology were made in 1947 with the unearthing of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Discovered also were some coins that help to substantiate theories contained in this book. We should keep in mind that the coins found in the Qumrân caves are not hoards but single coins strewn about the floor. For the purpose of our book this distinction is important. In our section on the "widow's mite" we observed that in Palestine of old certain coin types were in greater circulation than others. This may now be considered proven by the coin inventories from the caves.

These coins were individually found and collected under archeological supervision within one restricted area, offering us a cross-country sampling of coins as they existed. It further gives proof of the relation of different coins and a general view of their original circulation ratio. In the case of the "mite" we see that the "Alexander" coins were found in overwhelming quantities in comparison to types issued by Jewish rulers of other periods—a fact on which our "mite" story is partly built.

Here, then, is a tabulation of the coins found in the Qumrân caves:

Antiochus VII, 136, 130, 129 B.C.	3 silver coins
John Hyrcan, 135–105 B.C.	14 (some uncertain)
Alexander Jannaeus, 104–78 B.C.	38



Hasmonean (uncertain)	15
Antigonus Mattathias, 40–37 B.C.	2
Herod the Great, 37–4 B.C.	1
Tyre, A.D. 29	1 silver
Herod Archelaus, 4 B.C.–A.D. 6	6 (one uncertain)
Procurators under Emperor Augustus	3
Procurators under Emperor Tiberius	7
Agrippa I, A.D. 37–44	23
Procurators under Claudius	5
Procurators under Nero	15
First Revolt, A.D. 66–70, year “2”	11

(This listing of the first and second coin finds at Qumrân is taken from the *Revue Biblique*, 1954, page 230.)

John Hyrcan	1
Judas Aristobulus, 105–104 B.C.	1
Alexander Jannaeus	48
Hyrcan II, 67–40 B.C.	3
Hasmonean (uncertain)	5
Antigonus Mattathias	1
Herod the Great	4
Herod Archelaus	5
Procurators under Augustus	7
Tyre, A.D. 12	1 silver coin
Procurators under Tiberius	22
Tyre, A.D. 36	1 silver coin
Agrippa I	37
Procurators under Claudius	1
Procurators under Nero	16
Nero, A.D. 61	1 silver
First Revolt, year “2”	62
First Revolt, year “3”	5

(This listing of the third, fourth, and fifth coin finds at Qumrân is taken from the *Revue Biblique*, 1956, page 565.)

## APPENDIX F

### A Letter by Simon Bar Kochba

AMONG the Biblical Scrolls found in the Dead Sea caves there are also some documents which are of importance for the history of the Second Revolt against the Romans under the leadership of Simon Bar Kochba. One document important to us is a letter reproduced on Plate XXXII together with the transcription into modern Hebrew and its English translation.

What follows are excerpts from some commentaries published up until now about this interesting letter. As the reader can see, the experts are in complete disagreement about the identity of the writer of the famous letter.

No. 1—J. T. Milik and R. P. R. de Vaux in *Revue Biblique*, 1953, no. 2, pp. 245–295

No. 2—S. Yeivin in *Atiqot*, vol. I, 1955, pp. 95 ff.

No. 3—S. A. Birnbaum in *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, 1954, pp. 23 ff.

No. 4—Solomon Zeitlin in *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, Philadelphia, 1956, p. 32

#### No. 1

Un groupe de papyrus est spécialement intéressant. Nous avons plusieurs textes, qui sont malheureusement incomplets mais qui ont à peu près le même contenu est qui sont datés de “la délivrance d’Israël par le ministère de Shime’on ben Kosebah, le nâsi d’Israël.” On ne peut douter qu’il s’agisse de la Seconde Révolte juive en 132–135 de notre ère et de son chef, que les sources postérieures appellent tantôt Bar Kokeba, tantôt Bar (ou Ben) Kozeba.

Le même lot contient deux lettres de Ben Kosebah lui-même, dont l'une est publiée par J. T. Milik dans ce même fascicule de la *Revue Biblique*. Elles sont adressées à un certain Yeshu'a ben Gilgola. Une autre lettre au moins, fragmentaire mais écrite par le même scribe, peut être envoyée par le même Ben Kosebah.

La signature est bien abîmée. La restitution מַעֲוֹן [ש] est pourtant tout à fait certaine. Deux points d'encre à la lisière de la partie rongée permettent-ils d'ajouter encore נְשִׂיא / יִשְׂרָאֵל, le dernier de ces points correspondant au sommet du *lamed* d'יִשְׂרָאֵל? Il faudrait alors admettre que cette titulature était assez serrée, sans intervalles entre les mots, comme entre שְׁמֵעוֹן et בֶּן dans la partie conservée. La teneur générale de la lettre s'accorderait pourtant bien avec la pleine titulature de l'envoyeur: "Shim'on ben Koseba, le Prince d'Israël," telle que nous la connaissons par plusieurs autres documents.

## No. 2

Abbé Milik's reconstruction of the signature in this line seems very plausible. All the more so, since it is allegedly based on similar occurrences in other still unpublished documents. Very interesting are also his remarks on the greater cursivity of the signature (especially the *M* and *B*).

The document published by Abbé Milik is much shorter . . . and seems to be a letter addressed by Bar-Kôkh'bâ (in his own handwriting) to the same commander Yêšûa' the son of Galilgôlâ.

This letter, too, appears to be written on a palimpsest papyrus, seemingly across the strips. The photograph shows clear traces of washed-out writing under and between the lines of this letter, to which previously written text undoubtedly belong also the several blurred characters (in two lines) on the top of this sheet. The letter does not show a hand of a trained scribe accustomed to fluent writing, and yet it

testifies to a man familiar with writing (as compared, e.g., with the half-ignorant scrawls of some of the signatories on the document discussed above, belonging undoubtedly to nearly illiterate peasants). It should be noted, again, that the spelling strongly inclines to *scriptio defectiva*, which *penchant* should not be wondered at, in view of the fact that the main reading matter with which people would have been familiar then was the Masoretic text of the Bible with its preponderantly defective spelling. And yet the writer employs sometimes "vulgar" forms of spelling, probably due to the fact that he writes down what he actually hears pronounced, without troubling to analyze it as far as word formations are concerned, which an educated person would be likely to do quite automatically; and his construction of sentences is grammatically illogical and rather involved.

Admittedly this is bad logic on the part of the writer and still worse composition (syntax). But it has in this author's humble opinion one advantage: it does still accord with grammatical and palaeographic possibilities of transliteration and translation. Moreover, it has already been pointed out above that the writer of the letter, though familiar with writing, does not seem to have been a fluent scribe, and felt probably more at ease with a sword in his hand than with a scribe's stylus. He lets his thoughts run away with him in a forceful expression of his indignation, without troubling to round them off in proper epistolary niceties of wording and composition.

Scanty as the material is, it sheds some light on various aspects of the history of this period as well as of life and conditions under the Bar Kôkh'bâ regime.

First and foremost is the fact that the controversy about Bar Kôkh'bâ's personal name and the identity of the Šim'ôn mentioned on the Jewish coinage of the period is definitely settled. There can be no further doubt that "Šim'ôn n'sí' Yisrá'êl" is Šim'ôn ben Kôsibâ, i.e., Bar Kôkh'bâ himself, as the author has always maintained.

## NO. 3: PRINCE OF ISRAEL

On the basis of other documents, as yet unpublished, Milik suggests that the signature might possibly have been followed by the title נָסִיאַ/נְשִׂיאֵ יִשְׂרָאֵל.

If our letter had contained these words they could hardly have been written in line 8, straight after *Kosba*. Even a very crowded arrangement, as in line 4, would have brought the final letters to the edge of the papyrus—and this edge is preserved and it is empty. Thus fifteen letters—even omitting the intervals between the four words—would have had to be compressed into the part which is torn off. And that is not possible. The corresponding space in lines 1–6 contains 10–13 units (i.e., letters or intervals between the words) each. The title would therefore have been written in the subsequent line. What is left of the papyrus under the name makes it unlikely (though not impossible) that there was writing there, because we would expect the top of it to be just showing at the bottom edge of the papyrus. The title would thus have had to be more to the left (of the hypothetical line 9). On the whole, it seems rather unlikely that in this document the name was followed by the title.

Who penned this letter?

If we had only the body of this Letter we would have no means of deciding whether Bar Kokhba himself wrote it or whether he had it written for him. Fortunately, we have a few letters of the signature. Let us compare them with their counterparts in the body of the document.

*Mem*: Only part of the letter is preserved, and, add to that, the lower portion of the long stroke apparent on the photo seems to be just a tear in the papyrus. But it is possible to compare the top left portion of the letters: they differ completely. *Ayin*: In the text, the strokes have heads, in the signature they have not. *Waw* resembles the *yodh* rather than the *waw* of the text. *Final Nun* is very short and almost straight. In the text it is very long and wavy.



With the letters differing so essentially, it seems hardly possible that the text and signature were written by the same hand. Hence we believe the body of the letter was not written by Bar Kokhba himself. The writer drew his letters irregularly. In addition his lines are not straight. Comparison with the writing of the Biblical fragment from about the same time makes it clear that Bar Kokhba's secretary could hardly have been a professional scribe, nor a man who did a great deal of writing. On the other hand he is perfectly literate.

#### No. 4

The historicity of the so-called Bar Kokba letter has no more validity than the letter of Jacob the son of Isaac, or the letter of King Solomon to the Queen of Sheba.

Sonne dealt with only one of my contentions that no letter in antiquity ever began with the preposition "from." He bypassed my statement that ancient letters bore no signature at the end and ignored my refusal to accept the Bar Kokba letter as genuine because it bears a signature at the end. I also objected because only the name and no title of the sender of the so-called Bar-Kokba letter appeared in the beginning. If this letter was indeed written by Bar Kokba, who was called the prince, it would have been addressed, "Simon ben Kose-ba" (the deceiver), and the title "the prince of Israel, to . . ."

After No. 1 published the document, No. 2 agreed with him wholly and stated (like many other writers) that "the identity of Simon mentioned on the Jewish coinage of the period is definitely settled."

However, No. 3 doubted the truth of the identification "Prince of Israel" and No. 4 declared that the letter is a fake altogether. Interesting also is the debate as to whether the man wrote the letter himself fully or only put his signature to it.

From the viewpoint in this book it is of importance to note that the letter does not start with "From Simon Bar Kochba Prince of Israel." *Since the title is not given at the beginning, it is only logical that the writer did not sign this title at the end.* It is also important that the letter is *not dated*. In conformity with No. 4 we should expect at the end of the letter not the signature but the date of writing.

No. 1 mentions that documents are extant which are dated from the "deliverance of Israel by Simon Bar Kochba, Nasi of Israel." Assuming that these documents are authentic, our answer is that the people used a phrase from the coinage with which they were familiar to embellish their writings.

We have two strong points in favor of our opinion that the status of Simon cannot be determined on the basis of the letter. One is that Simon did not style himself Nasi in his own letter. The second is that on the coins Simon is called "Nasi" only on those dated from the first year. (Note: There is only one rare coin from the second year inscribed "Nasi.")

The whole matter of the Dead Sea Scrolls is so full of speculation that there should be no reason to exclude the possibility that Bar Kochba's first name was by chance the same as that of the Hasmonean Prince.

## APPENDIX G

### Hidden Proof in a Modest Coin of King Agrippa I

WE HAD OCCASION to discuss the bronze coins of King Agrippa I in two sections of the book: "Agrippa's Coins" (pages 121-39) and "Fertility Symbols on Ancient Jewish Coins" (pages 191 and 192, where we talked about the *lulab*). In order not to be sidetracked from the main subjects, we refrained from calling the reader's attention to a significant symbolic and political feature of a Greek-inscribed coin issued by Agrippa in Jerusalem during the reign of the Roman Emperor Claudius.

On the obverse of this coin (see Figure 14 and Plate X), we find a strange triangular object whose long sides form a knob-like apex and whose base is adorned with fringes. A straight, sticklike line with a pearl on each end heads vertically into the center of the base, while the whole figure is surrounded by the Greek inscription "King Agrippa." On the reverse side there are three ears of barley, set into an ornamental bed, surrounded by the Greek-inscribed date, "Year 6."

The ears of barley are easily identified on the reverse, but the figure on the obverse requires an explanation. Throughout numismatic literature this fringed triangle and stick are identified as an opened umbrella. What such a mundane object is doing on the Agrippa coin, however, is a question which seems to have bothered no one except Dr. B.

Kirschner. He went beyond the routine description of the so-called archaic umbrella by linking it with the *anchor* symbol. In an article for the *Jewish Palestine Exploration Society* (vol. XI, 1944-45), Dr. Kirschner noted that this figure on Agrippa I's coins represents "an archaic umbrella—or basket—or mushroom-*anchor*, alluding to certain maritime events in the King's history." (See our discussion of the *anchor* on page 207-208.)

# I

Let us first look at the political aspects of this Agrippa coin. We commented on page 135 that the "re-establishment of amicable relationship with the imperial family, severed during the reign of Tiberius, may have been commemorated with a coin whose design imitated a Roman type." By this we mean the Hebrew bronze coins inscribed "Freedom of Zion," represented in Figure 12. (Compare these with the Roman procuratorial coins of Figure 15.) Proof for our "commemoration" theory may also be found on Agrippa's Greek-



FIGURE 37

Roman  
Procuratorial

Agrippa's Greek-  
inscribed coin

"Freedom of Zion"  
bronze

In the center are the obverse and reverse of Agrippa's Greek-inscribed coin. To the left is a Roman procuratorial coin which served as a model for both the Greek coin of Agrippa and his Hebrew "Freedom of Zion" bronzes.

inscribed coin shown in Figure 14. There we note a design of three ears of barley, in imitation of a Roman procuratorial coin, with three stalks in a bed. In addition to similar pictorial representations, the dates on both coins are arranged—left and right—in exactly the same way. Quite clearly, then, Agrippa used the Roman coin as a model for his Greek-inscribed coin and also for his Hebrew coins.

## II

Now let us consider the ideological content of the pictorial presentations on the Greek-inscribed Agrippa coin. As far as the reverse is concerned, the symbolism is clearly agricultural and the seeds of barley signify fertility while the three ears bedded in the semi-circle of the base are phallic. The obverse, too, reveals the intent of the artist, as we note the following symbolic arrangements that make up the umbrella-anchor: The knobbed, moundlike triangle is the female element, the stick at the base is male, and the fringes represent seeds.



FIGURE 38

Umbrella-anchor

To us, this Agrippa coin seems typical of the ingenious use of composite symbolism and its adaptability to socio-political situations. It also shows the historical value of the ancient Jewish coins in recording and revealing the ambitions and intents of the issuer.



## APPENDIX H

### Notes on Fertility Symbols

LITERATURE dealing with the symbolic meaning of designs and motifs found on ancient Jewish coins is extremely meager. But some measure of compensation is provided by general studies of symbolism which offer insights into the thinking of the ancients and the universal pattern of symbols. The selective listing here calls attention to some works that are of especial interest.

Bonwick, James, *Egyptian Belief and Modern Thought*. Colorado, 1956.

D'Alviella, Goblet, *The Migration of Symbols*. New York, 1956.

Gaster, Theodor H., *The Holy and the Profane*. New York, 1955.

Goldberg, B. Z., *The Sacred Fire*. New York, 1932.

Goodenough, Erwin R., *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, vol. IV. New York, 1954.

Inman, Thomas, *Ancient Pagan and Modern Christian Symbolism*. New York, 1922.

Knight, Richard Payne, *The Symbolical Language of Ancient Art and Mythology*. New York, 1876.

Kramer, Samuel Noah, *From the Tablets of Sumer*. Colorado, 1956.

Rankin, Oliver Shaw, *The Origins of the Festival of Hanukkah: The Jewish New Age Festival*. London, 1930.

Romanoff, Paul, *Jewish Symbols on Ancient Jewish Coins*. Philadelphia, 1944.

Westropp, Hodder M., and C. Staniland Wake, *Ancient*

*Symbol Worship: Influence of the Phallic Idea in the Religion of Antiquity.* New York, 1875.

Westropp, Hodder M., *Primitive Symbolism*. Undated.

It must be understood that ancient coins, aside from their commercial use, embodied religious and cultural concepts and traditions. Of course, this notion underlies our approach to the ancient Jewish coin symbols. Richard Payne Knight in his well-documented pioneering study forcefully brings home the fact that coin research related to the ancients requires an understanding of cultural patterns. He makes the following observation:

In examining . . . the symbols in the remains of ancient art, which have escaped the barbarism and bigotry of the Middle Ages, we may sometimes find it difficult to distinguish between those compositions which are mere efforts of taste and fancy, and those which were emblems of what were thought divine truths: but, nevertheless, this difficulty is not so great, as it at first appears to be; for there is such an obvious analogy and connection between the different emblematical monuments, not only of the same, but of different and remote countries, that, when properly arranged and brought under one point of view, they, in a great degree, explain themselves by mutually explaining each other. There is one class, too, the most numerous and important of all, which must have been designed and executed under the sanction of public authority; and therefore, whatever meaning they contain, must have been the meaning of nations, and not the caprice of individuals.

This is the class of coins, the devices upon which were always held so strictly sacred, that the most proud and powerful monarchs never ventured to put their portraits upon them, until the practice of deifying sovereigns had enrolled them among the gods. Neither the kings of Persia, Macedonia, or Epirus, nor even the tyrants of Sicily, ever took

this liberty; the first portraits that we find upon money being those of the Egyptian and Syrian dynasties of Macedonian princes, whom the flattery of their subjects had raised to divine honors. The artists had indeed before found a way of gratifying the vanity of their patrons without offending their piety, which was by mixing their features with those of the deity whose image was to be impressed; an artifice which seems to have been practiced in the coins of several of the Macedonian kings, previous to the custom of putting their portraits upon them.

It is, in a great degree, owing to the sanctity of the devices, that such numbers of very ancient coins have been preserved fresh and entire; for it was owing to this that they were put into tombs, with vases and other sacred symbols, and not as Lucian has ludicrously supposed, that the dead might have the means of paying for their passage over the Styx: the whole fiction of Charon and his boat being of late date, and posterior to many tombs in which coins have been found.

The first species of money that was circulated by tale, and not by weight, of which we have any account, consisted of spikes or small obelisks of brass or iron, which were, as we shall show, symbols of great sanctity, and high antiquity. Six of them being as many as the hand could conveniently grasp, the words *obolus* and *drachma*, signifying *spike* and *handful*, continued, after the invention of coining, to be employed in expressing the respective value of two pieces of money, the one of which was worth six of the other. In Greece and Macedonia, and probably wherever the Macedonians extended their conquests, the numerary division seems to have regulated the scale of coinage; but, in Sicily and Italy, the mode of reckoning by weight, or according to the lesser talent, and its subdivisions, universally prevailed. Which mode was in use among the Asiatic colonies, prior to their subjection to the Athenians or Macedonians, or which is the most ancient, we have not been able to discover. Probably, however, it was that by weight, the only one which appears

to have been known to the Homeric Greeks; the other may have been introduced by the Dorians.

By opening the tombs, which the ancients held sacred, and exploring the foundations of ruined cities, where money was concealed, modern cabinets have been enriched with more complete series of coins than could have been collected in any period of antiquity. We can thus bring under one point of view the whole progress of the art from its infancy to its decline, and compare the various religious symbols which have been employed in ages and countries remote from each other. These symbols have the great advantage over those preserved in other branches of sculpture, that they have never been mutilated or restored; and also that they exhibit two compositions together, one on each side of the coin, which mutually serve to explain each other, and thus enable us to read the symbolical or mystical writing with more certainty than we are enabled to do in any other monuments. (*The Symbolical Language of Ancient Art and Mythology*, pp. 7-9.)

## APPENDIX I

### A New Key to the Dating of Ancient Jewish Coins

THIS TABLE of new classifications for the ancient Jewish coins has been arrived at through a considerable amount of soul-searching, and, of course, it represents conclusions based on the mass of evidence accumulated in this book. Like its predecessors, this table should be regarded as a guide which is subject to change and revision when further research and evidence calls for it.

In order to facilitate comparison for the coin collector or numismatist, whenever there are corresponding coins in A. Reifenberg's book on *Ancient Jewish Coins* their numbers are listed here in the special column at the right of our new key.

#### FIRST PERIOD

From an uncertain date till the beginning of the  
Hasmonean Dynasty, 143/142 B.C.

##### *Mint I*

Small copper of the lepton size with name of King  
Alexander; anchor-star type of primitive design

*Not in R.*

##### *Mint II*

Larger copper of the size of quadrantes with name of  
King Alexander; anchor-sun-wheel type of primitive  
design

*Not in R.*



SECOND PERIOD

Officiating time of High Priest Simon Maccabaeus,  
143/142 till 136/135 B.C.

*Mint I*

As before

*Mint II*

As before

*Mint III*

Silver shekel with numeral *Alef* (one) R. 137

Silver half-shekel as before R. 138

THIRD PERIOD

Officiating time of the High Priest Jehochanan Hyrcan I,  
135-105 B.C.

*Mint I*

As before

*Mint II*

As before

*Mint III*

Copper of the quadrantes size with name and title of  
the high priest in Hebrew characters *Not in R.*

Later also with "Community of the Jews" R. 9-12

Silver shekel with numerals 2-5 R. 139, 141, 143, 145

Silver half-shekel with numerals 2-4 R. 140, 142, 144

FOURTH PERIOD

Reign of the Hasmonean Kings and High Priests

Jehuda Aristobulus I

Jehonathan Jannaeus Alexander

Salome Alexandra

Jehochanan Hyrcan II

Jonathan Aristobulus II

105-40 B.C.

*Mint I*

As before; however the design improving and ending  
with the anchor-flower type R. 15-17

*Mint II*

As before; however the design improving and sometimes  
with "King Jehonathan" in Hebrew on reverse R. 14

*Mint III*

Copper as before R. 8, 13, 19, 20

## FIFTH PERIOD

Reign of the Hasmonean King and  
High Priest Mattathias Antigonus, 40-37 B.C.

The 3 mints consolidated, which is announced by the  
double-struck copper coin of quadrantes size R. 18

Large copper of shekel size and half-shekel size with the  
king's name in Greek and Hebrew R. 21-22

Small copper of different and new designs R. 23-25

## SIXTH PERIOD

Reign of King Herod I and his son Archelaus,  
37 B.C. till 6 C.E.

The 3 mints re-established

*Mint I*

Assorted small copper of Herods design R. 34-36

*Mint II*

Middle-size copper of Herods design R. 27-33

*Mint III*

Large-size copper of Herods design R. 26

Introduction of flat silver shekel with Temple design R. 165

SEVENTH PERIOD

Judea under Roman Procurators Appointed by  
Emperors Augustus and Tiberius, 6–36 C.E.

*Mint I*

Imitations of the anchor-star leptons *Not in R.*

*Mint II*

Quadrantes with names of emperors *R. 118–133*

*Mint III*

Hebrew prototypes I–VI *R. 165, 169, 186, 190 variae, 193  
variae, 205*

EIGHTH PERIOD

Reign of King Agrippa I, 37–44 C.E.

*Mint I*

As before

*Mint II*

Quadrantes with name of king in Greek *R. 59*

Quadrantes with Hebrew inscription "Freedom of Zion"  
*R. 147–149*

*Mint III*

Larger copper with Hebrew inscription "Redemption of  
Zion" *R. 4–6*

NINTH PERIOD

The Procurators Under Claudius and Nero  
till end of First Revolt, 44–70 C.E.

*Mint I*

As before

*Mint II*

Quadrantes with names of emperors *R. 134–136*

*Mint III*

Hebrew coin types created by intermingling the pro-  
totypes *R. 163–207*

## TENTH PERIOD

From After the First Revolt  
till end of Second Revolt, 70–135 C.E.

Continuation of minting of original and intermingled

Hebrew types in silver and copper R. 163–207

Overstriking of same on blanks of foreign coins, mostly  
of issues by emperors Galba till Hadrian

## Bibliography

UP TO the end of the nineteenth century important spade-work in the field of Jewish coins was made exclusively in Europe. The coin material was sent there by local Palestinian merchants who were completely unaware of its significance. A full record of the accumulated knowledge about the coins at that time is contained in F. W. Madden's *Coins of the Jews* (London, 1881; 1903). Because of its wealth of historical material, this work will continue to be a classic for a long time to come.

A somewhat modernized approach is offered in Rev. E. Rogers' *A Handy Guide to Jewish Coins* (London, 1914). The excellent coin reproductions in collotype contained in this little book make it particularly valuable.

What eventually became the standard work in the field was the superb *Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum*, which contains the volume on "Palestine" (London, 1914) by G. F. Hill.

Unfortunately, these books have been out of print for some time and are not readily available. The reader's need was filled by A. Reifenberg's *Ancient Jewish Coins* (Jerusalem, 1947). This book is presently in print and is most useful for quick orientation.

Readers who wish bibliographical information on coin symbolism are referred to the "Notes on Fertility Symbols" in another section of our book.

The following is a list of articles by Wolf Wirgin. On the basis of numismatic response to the articles and new research since their publication, Wolf Wirgin has extensively elaborated on his theories in this book, hoping for further reaction and exchange of findings that will help to unravel many of the coin-dating problems that still exist in this field.



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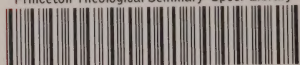






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